

'Will bring it up in Budget session, fight to continue until MGNREGA gets repealed'

Mallikargun Kharge at workers' convention

Meanwhile, the Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi claimed that the Modi government's objectives are the same in repealing MGNREGA as they were in bringing the 'three black farm laws'.

New Delhi.(Agency) Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge Thursday promised that the party will fight against the name change of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) scheme (renamed as VG-G RAM G) during the Budget session, which is scheduled to begin on January 28 this year. Speaking during the National MGNREGA Workers' Convention in New Delhi, organised by the Rachnaikar Congress, Kharge said, "Our fight is going to be a long one. Satyagraha or shouting slogans won't help in this fight. Till they don't repeal the new laws and bring MGNREGA back, we will continue our fight." "In the Budget session, we will fight for this issue. This is our promise to you... [The name change] is an attempt to remove Mahatma Gandhi's



name from public memory, weaken Gram Swaraj concept," he said.

'Objectives similar to three black farm laws'

Meanwhile, the Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi claimed that the Modi government's objectives are the same in repealing MGNREGA as they were in bringing the 'three black farm laws', as he urged poor people to unite against the move to bring the VG-G RAM G Act, news agency PTI reported.

Addressing the Convention, the Congress leader said the concept of MGNREGA was to give rights to the poor. "The thinking was to provide work to those who need it. This scheme was to be run through the third tier of government - Panchayati Raj. The word rights was important. All poor people had the right to work under MGNREGA and PM Modi-BJP wants to finish that concept," Gandhi said. The government also brought in the "three black farm laws" a few years ago, following which farmers were able to halt it by putting pressure "unitedly" on them, the former Congress chief said. "We all put pressure and got the laws repealed. They are doing the same thing with workers that they did with farmers as they brought the three black farm laws," he said in his speech, quoted. Gandhi also alleged that the new law will enable the Centre to decide the work and allocation of funds with BJP-ruled governments always getting precedence. What workers used to get earlier will now be given to contractors and bureaucracy, he added.

Arvind Kejriwal & Bhagwant Mann's health guarantee stands fulfilled in Punjab

The Sikh Times

NEW DELHI / PUNJAB: The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) fulfills its promise of free healthcare in Punjab as National Convenor Arvind Kejriwal and Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann launch the 'Mukh Mantri Sehat Yojna' (MMSY) in Mohali, extending free treatment of up to ₹10 lakh to every family in the state. With the scheme now in force, even the most expensive private hospitals previously accessible only to the wealthy are opened to the poor, marking a decisive shift in public welfare delivery. Punjab, under the AAP government, now becomes the first state in the country to guarantee free healthcare, free education, free electricity, and free bus travel for women, while Arvind Kejriwal asserts that power-hungry opposition parties remain consumed by internal battles, and that only the AAP can secure a safe future for Punjab. On this occasion, AAP Convenor Arvind Kejriwal and CM Bhagwant Singh Mann handed over Mukh Mantri Sehat Yojna cards to some of the eligible beneficiaries. During the launch of the Mukh Mantri Sehat Yojna, AAP National Convenor Arvind Kejriwal said that today is not just a big and historic day for Punjab, but for the entire country. "The work that is going to be done in Punjab today should perhaps have been done back in 1950. All those who fought for independence did not strug-



gle so that one day the British would leave and our own governments would be formed, only for those governments to do nothing for the people," he said. The AAP Supremo said that over the past 75 years, many governments came and went, but none of them truly cared for the people. Big promises

Guarantees," one of which was a health guarantee, that free and quality healthcare would be provided for every person and every citizen of Punjab. "People did not believe it back then," he said. The AAP Supremo continued, "In those days, the Congress government was in power. First, Captain Amarinder Singh was the CM, and then Charanjit Singh Channi. They used to say that the treasury was empty, the government was running in deficit, and there was no money." "They said that Arvind Kejriwal was roaming around spreading lies about free electricity, free healthcare, and free education, and that none of this was possible because there was no money. But the AAP government proved that all the guarantees could indeed be fulfilled," he added. Arvind Kejriwal said that today, electricity is being provided for free and good schools are being built. Free healthcare arrangements had been started earlier, but today's step is a very big one. In the past four years, the government has built around 1,000 mohalla clinics located in villages and neighborhoods," he asserted. He pointed out that these are not ordinary clinics, and stated, "Over the last 75 years, the Akali Dal, BJP, and Congress governments together opened only 400 primary health centers, while the present government has built 1,000 mohalla clinics in just four years, and another 500 are under construction."

Contd.....page-7

Andhra mulling Australia-style social media ban for children under 16: Minister

Andhra minister Nara Lokesh said the government was studying Australia's new legislation that banned under-16 children from using major social media services like TikTok, Facebook, Instagram.

New Delhi . (Agency)

Andhra Pradesh minister Nara Lokesh revealed that the government was planning a ban on social media for children under 16, similar to the one implemented by Australia last month. Speaking with Bloomberg on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, the Andhra IT minister said youngsters below a



certain age do not fully understand the content they are exposed to on social media, and a strong legal framework was the need of the hour. "Youngsters below a certain age should not be on such platforms, as they do not fully understand the content they are exposed to. Thus, a strong legal framework may be required," Lokesh asserted. In December last year, the Anthony Albanese government banned children under 16 years of age from using major social media services like TikTok, X, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Snapchat. Under the ban, the first of its kind, children cannot set up new accounts, and existing profiles would have to be deactivated.

UP tableau to present a unified vision of heritage and development at Republic Day Parade

The Sikh Times

New Delhi/Lucknow, January 22: On the occasion of Republic Day, Uttar Pradesh's tableau at the national parade on Kartavya Path, New Delhi, is set to once again emerge as a major attraction for audiences from India and across the world. Under the leadership of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, the tableau vividly portrays the state's rich cultural heritage alongside its dynamic development journey, with a special focus on the glorious legacy of Bundelkhand. The presentation brings to life the historic grandeur of the ancient Kalinjar Fort while simultaneously reflecting the fast evolving image of modern Uttar Pradesh. It embodies the Yogi government's vision of balanced governance, where preservation of heritage and accelerated development go hand in hand. At the forefront of the tableau stands the iconic "Ekamukh Lingam", one of the most renowned rock cut sculptures of Kalinjar Fort. It symbolizes Bundelkhand's ancient spiritual traditions, cultural consciousness and deep

rooted religious faith, highlighting the region's timeless his-



torical identity. The central section showcases Bundelkhand's vibrant handicraft traditions, including pottery, bead craft and local trade practices. These art forms are promoted under the 'One District One Product' (ODOP) scheme, reflecting the Yogi government's focused efforts to empower traditional artisans, connect them to global markets and promote self-reliance. This segment underscores Bundelkhand's economic resilience and strong cultural

ethos. The rear portion of the tableau features intricately carved pillars and majestic gateways of Kalinjar Fort, with tourists depicted exploring its historic corridors. The magnificent representation of the Neelkanth Mahadev Temple further reinforces Kalinjar's spiritual significance and architectural splendor, positioning Bundelkhand as a prominent cultural and tourism destination. Adding vibrancy to the tableau, Bundeli artists perform traditional folk dances, bringing alive the region's folk culture, festive spirit and colorful traditions. These performances reflect a way of life deeply rooted in Bundelkhand's heritage and community values. The final segment of the tableau transitions into a modern structure inspired by fort architecture, symbolizing strength and progress. It features representations of the Brahmos missile, expansive expressway networks, industrial growth and world-class infrastructure. Together, these elements highlight Uttar Pradesh's rapid development, enhanced defense capabilities and robust infrastructure under the Yogi government's leadership.

Amit Shah hails Gita Press as 'indispensable' pillar of Indian culture, Sanatan Dharma

Dehradun.(Agency)

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday delivered a powerful tribute to the esteemed Gita Press, describing it as an "indispensable institution" for anyone who values Indian culture and follows Sanatan Dharma.

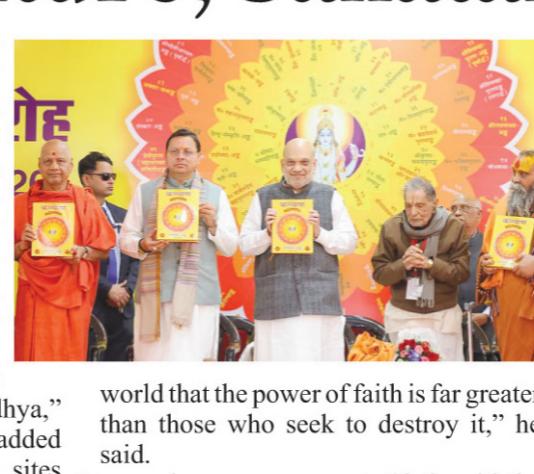
Speaking at an event in Rishikesh after the release of the centenary edition of Gita Press's monthly magazine Kalyan, Shah underscored the organisation's crucial role in safeguarding and propagating India's spiritual heritage for nearly a century.

"No person in India or the world who has expectations from Sanatan Dharma, who looks towards Indian culture for solutions to the world's problems, and

who loves this land can possibly remain unaware of Gita Press," Shah said, emphasising its national significance.

The Home Minister linked the cultural resurgence sweeping the country to the trajectory set by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership and cited several milestones as evidence of this renewed national vigour.

"After 550 years, a towering temple of Lord Ram has been built in Ayodhya," Shah said, drawing applause. He added that the restoration of historic sites reaffirmed national pride. "The Kashi Vishwanath Corridor, destroyed by Aurangzeb, sends a message to the entire



world that the power of faith is far greater than those who seek to destroy it," he said.

In a major announcement, Shah said the Government of India will observe the entire upcoming year as Somnath Swabhiman Varsh (Somnath Self-

Respect Year), marking 1,000 years since the destruction of the revered Somnath Temple. "Somnath was destroyed 16 times and rebuilt 16 times. Those who destroyed it have all vanished, but the eternal flag of Somnath still flies high today," he asserted, highlighting the resilience of the Hindu faith.

The minister also listed other cultural recoveries, including the abrogation of Article 370, the construction of the Mahakaleshwar Corridor, and the revival of the Kedarnath shrine. He noted that work is underway to revive over 35 pilgrimage sites across the country, along with the repatriation of more than 642 stolen idols.

News box

Gurgaon horror: Ex-Navy man dies after wife accidentally stabs him in chest**Gurgaon.(Agency)**

A 45-year-old retired Navy officer, Sunil Kumar, died on Wednesday after being accidentally stabbed in the chest by his wife, Mamta, police said.

The incident occurred as Kumar, reportedly in an inebriated state, stumbled while walking towards the bathroom. His wife, who was cutting vegetables, tried to support him, but the knife in her hand accidentally pierced his chest. The family initially claimed that Kumar had suffered a heart attack, but a post-mortem examination revealed the fatal chest injury, SI Ranjit Singh said. Kumar, who retired from the Indian Navy five years ago, was employed with a private company and lived with his wife and two sons.

The police said the incident took place on 18 January. Kumar was rushed to the hospital but was declared dead on arrival. An FIR under sections of culpable homicide not amounting to murder has been registered against Mamta at Kherki Daula police station.

Cops step up security around Zomato founder's home, office after death threat**Gurgaon.(Agency)**

Security and surveillance have been heightened by police around the office and residence of Deepender Goyal, founder of food delivery platform Zomato's parent company Eternal Limited, after he received a death threat. Police had received a tip-off a few days ago that some antisocial elements were planning to target Goyal or open fire at his office in the city. Senior police officers ordered immediate security measures to prevent any attack, according to sources. Security personnel have been deployed outside Goyal's properties in the city, and multiple police and crime teams have been placed on alert. Sources said Goyal was informed about the threat. Police have not officially confirmed the threat against Goyal. A police officer said deployment near the entrepreneur's office was part of Republic Day security arrangements. Sources, however, said senior officers are monitoring the situation and that enhanced measures are being taken as a precaution. Sources also said teams from the local police station, along with multiple crime units, are closely monitoring the area around the businessman's office. On Wednesday, Goyal announced he is stepping down as group CEO of Eternal Limited, subject to shareholder approval. He will remain on the board as vice chairman.

Haryana driver flees with dry fruit truck, GPS goes dark on Mumbai-Delhi route**Gurgaon.(Agency)**

On Jan 14, a truck — carrying almonds and cloves worth over Rs 1.2 crore — left Mumbai for Delhi. On Jan 17 at 12.20am, the vehicle's GPS system stopped transmitting data. Repeated attempts to contact the driver — Rizwan, a resident of Nuh district — failed as his mobile phone was switched off.

On Jan 19, an FIR was registered at Bilaspur police station on the complaint of Praveen Kumar Sethi, owner of Shri Aapka Transport Private Limited, who alleged that his driver made off with both the truck and its high-value cargo. The consignment was destined for a dry fruit market in Delhi's Shakur Basti and a cold storage facility in Sonipat's Kundli, police said on Monday. According to the complaint, the truck (RJ14GP8772) was loaded at Mumbai's Nhava Sheva port with 900 bags of almonds and 65 bags of cloves. Sethi said the almonds were valued at approximately Rs 1 crore, while the cloves were worth around Rs 23 lakh. Sethi said that as he suspected foul play, he tried to locate the truck and cargo on his own before approaching the police. Based on a complaint, police registered the case under Section 316(3) (criminal breach of trust) of BNS. An officer said teams were formed to trace the vehicle and the accused. "CCTV footage is being examined. We are also checking footage from toll plazas on NH8 and adjoining routes," the officer said.

Telangana go to draft master plan for Hathras Urban City**Noida.(Agency)**

Yamuna Authority (YEIDA) has appointed Telangana-based Aarvee Engineering Consultants Limited to prepare a master plan for Hathras Urban City, a greenfield urban centre planned over nearly 4,000 hectares. The plan will lay out a roadmap for the city's growth over the next two decades, till 2041.

Aarvee Engineering was selected through a competitive bidding process and they quoted Rs 1.25 crore for the assignment. The firm is supposed to complete the task within 9 months from the commencement date, excluding the final statutory approval stage. It will be carried out in phases, starting with an inception report within 15 days, followed by an existing situation assessment, vision planning, draft master plan preparation, stakeholder consultations and final approvals. Hathras is one of the four urban nodes, along with Aligarh, Mathura and Agra, planned under Phase II of the Yamuna Expressway Master Plan. Officials said the urban centre is being envisioned as a major industrial and residential hub, with a focus on large-scale manufacturing, agro-based industries and logistics. The project aims to promote MSME growth, boost exports and create large-scale employment, while also providing modern housing, civic amenities and infrastructure. According to planning documents, the industries proposed for the urban centre include agro and food processing, dairy and beverages, carpet manufacturing, ready-made garments, fabricated metal products, machine tools, electrical appliances and small vehicles. Advanced manufacturing, such as medical and surgical equipment and power-generation machinery, may also be encouraged in later phases.

Gurgaon.(Agency)

In a bid to fast-track the long-pending Millennium City Centre-Cyber City Metro corridor, the Haryana govt has notified a policy allowing GMRL to directly purchase private land through negotiated settlements. It has retained the option of compulsory acquisition if landowners refuse to cooperate.

While most of the 29.05km corridor alignment passes through govt-owned land, officials acknowledge that certain stretches — including viaduct sections close to existing buildings, properties requiring demolition and a metro depot planned largely on public land — necessitate acquisition of small but critical private parcels. "Even limited delays in acquiring these patches could affect the commissioning timeline of the entire project," a GMRL official said. The policy, notified by the town and country planning department on Jan 8, applies to private land required for the metro corridor, a key component of Gurgaon's Comprehensive Mobility Plan, which envisages nearly 200km of

metro and mass transport networks by 2041. Under the new 'Direct Purchase through Mutual Negotiation' model, landowners who agree to sell will be offered compensation calculated as per the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement (RFCLARR) Act, 2013, with an additional 25% incentive. Rehabilitation and resettlement benefits are deemed to be included in this enhanced amount. Payments will be made directly to landowners' bank accounts through electronic transfer, stamp duty on land registration will be waived and the entire cost will be borne by GMRL. A senior GMRL official said, "The policy is based on a mutual negotiation model, which is voluntary and more beneficial for landowners. Under this mechanism, compensation is substantially higher than market value,



with additional premiums, solatium and disturbance allowances and payments are made upfront." However, the policy also makes it clear that the negotiation route is time-bound. If a landowner refuses to sell, raises unresolved objections, or declines to participate in negotiations, the govt may initiate compulsory acquisition proceedings under the RFCLARR Act, 2013. In such cases, landowners would forgo the negotiated premium and be bound by

statutory timelines and compensation mechanisms. The GMRL official added, "Only if a landowner chooses not to participate in the negotiated settlement does the govt resort to the Central Land Acquisition Act, 2013 — a law that applies uniformly across the country for public infrastructure projects such as metros, highways and railways. Even under that Act,

there is a defined legal process, including notices, objections, compensation awards and the right to challenge the award in courts up to the Supreme Court. The negotiated settlement policy has been introduced precisely to avoid compulsory acquisition, reduce litigation and ensure faster execution of metro project while offering better compensation to landowners."

MRI didn't catch it: 29-year-old with rare brain infection survives after critical care in Noida**Gurgaon.(Agency)**

A 29-year-old man has recovered from a rare, life-threatening insect-borne brain infection after doctors in Noida relied on clinical judgment and aggressive treatment despite the condition going undetected on MRI scans.

Diagnosed with Rickettsial meningoencephalitis, he was admitted to a private hospital and placed in intensive care, where ventilator support proved crucial in preventing coma or death. Zoonotic in nature, the bacteria causing the disease are often transmitted by mite larvae called 'chiggers'. The condition occurs when an infection like scrub typhus spreads to the brain, causing severe inflammation. Its symptoms—fever, confusion and drowsiness—often mimic common illnesses, delaying diagnosis and making timely treatment critical.

According to doctors, the patient suffered from fever, confusion and altered behaviour for nearly a week. He was conscious but disoriented, with reduced appetite and increasing drowsiness. He had visited a hospital earlier, where his symptoms were mistaken for alcohol withdrawal. Interestingly, MRI scans of the brain showed no abnormality. But the patient's neurological condition began to worsen. According to Dr Niraj Kumar, a senior consultant of general medicine at Sharda Hospital, Greater Noida, he spotted a dark, scab-like mark on his abdomen. "The lesion, known as an eschar, is a key indicator of scrub typhus. Blood tests later confirmed that it was an insect-borne infection," he said. By then, the disease had already spread to his brain, said the doctor. "Although the scans were clear, Severe inflammation and swelling were suspected. Rickettsial meningoencephalitis is a rare and often underdiagnosed condition because its symptoms can resemble those of common viral and bacterial illnesses. In many cases, radiological findings remain normal in the early and critical stages," Kumar added.

Ghaziabad sees two blazes in 24 hours, no casualties**Ghaziabad.(Agency)**

The city witnessed two fire incidents within 24 hours. Firefighters rushed to the scenes and both incidents were brought under control without any casualties, officials said. Around 5.40pm on Tuesday, fire officials received information that a fire had broken out in an AMX medical equipment manufacturing unit in Mohan Nagar. Initially, two fire tenders were dispatched to the scene. According to chief fire officer (CFO) Rahul Pal, upon assessing the severity of the scene, eight more units from different stations across the city were also dispatched. The boundary wall at the site hindered firefighting efforts, and the wall was broken down to



extinguish the flames. It took firefighters around five hours to completely control the blaze.

"After the fire was extinguished, on-site inspection revealed that X-ray machines and equipment were manufactured in the factory, and plastic bags were stored in the basement, which were completely destroyed by the fire. There was no loss of life in the fire incident," the CFO said.

On Wednesday, around 11am, a resident visited the fire station in Loni and informed fire officials that a fire had broken out in a two-storey factory building in Tronica City. A total of three fire tenders were dispatched to the scene. The blaze was controlled within a short time without any injuries reported, the CFO said.

App glitches mar hearings for unmapped voters**Noida.(Agency)**

App glitches disrupted proceedings at some centres during the hearings for unmapped voters that began on Wednesday.

Unmapped voters are required to appear before the electoral registration officer (ERO) or assistant electoral registration officer (AERO) on the scheduled hearing date with documents specified in the notice issued to them.

The AERO mobile application developed snag during the initial hours of the hearings conducted under the special intensive revision (SIR) in Ghaziabad and Gautam Budh Nagar. Twenty-one hearing centres were set up in Ghaziabad and 35 in Gautam Budh Nagar, where AEROS are conducting hearings and verifying documents. Officials said hearings at all centres are being conducted to ensure that cases of unmapped voters are disposed of before the Feb 27 deadline.

As per the standard operating procedure laid down by the State Election Commission, AEROS are required to upload a photograph of themselves with the voter, along with scanned copies of the voter's

documents, on the AERO app. However, at several centres in Noida, officials faced difficulty uploading photographs and documents due to an app glitch, leading to long queues and delays. "I waited for at least one hour just to show my documents to the AERO at the hearing centre at Millennium School in Sector 119," said a resident, adding that multiple hearings were conducted simultaneously in a single room. The resident added, "When the AERO could not upload my photograph and documents on the app, I was told I would be called again after a few days. After I objected, I was asked to leave my photograph there so it could be uploaded later." Officials said the issue was resolved by noon. SDM Anuj Nehra, who is the electoral registration officer for Noida, said the problem was minor and temporary. "There were some issues with uploading the photograph of the voter and the documents, but it was resolved in a short time. No voter will be called again because of this," she said.

Officials said that if Aadhaar is submitted as a supporting document, it must be

accompanied by one additional document from the prescribed list. Verification and categorisation of records will then be carried out as per Election Commission guidelines. The document requirements vary according to the voter's year of birth. Those born before 1987 must submit their own identity proof. Voters born between 1987 and 2004 are required to furnish their own documents along with either their mother's or father's ID. Those born after 2004 must submit their own ID and identity documents of both parents. While the process remained largely smooth in urban areas, officials said documentation emerged as a major challenge in rural pockets and areas with lower literacy levels. "In many places, people only have Aadhaar, PAN, or ration cards, which are not acceptable. Birth certificates, Class 10 marksheets, or passports are rare," said an AERO in Ghaziabad, adding, "Though certificates like permanent residence certificates, caste certificates, or family registers are permitted, these are not easily available, making verification difficult."

Thunderstorms, lightning and moderate rainfall likely in Gurgaon**Gurgaon.(Agency)**

An intense western disturbance is likely to impact northwest India from Jan 22, triggering light to moderate rainfall, thunderstorms, hailstorm and gusty winds across parts of Punjab, Haryana and Chandigarh till Jan 24, IMD said in a forecast issued on Wednesday. The weather office said the system could lead to thunderstorms or lightning accompanied by gusty winds of 40-50 kmph, with wind speeds reaching up to 60 kmph at isolated locations during the period. Residents were advised to stay alert as the combination of strong winds, lightning and hail may lead to localised damage, power disruptions and risky travel conditions, especially during the evening and night hours.

Weather conditions in Gurgaon remained chilly on Wednesday, with a minor dip in daytime temperature. The maximum temperature was recorded at

22.4 degrees Celsius, around 1.4 degrees lower than the previous day. The minimum temperature settled at 5.9 degrees Celsius, keeping early mornings cold. As per IMD's district-wise forecast, Punjab is likely to receive light to moderate rain in many places on Jan 22, followed by rainfall in most places on Jan 23 and in isolated places on Jan 24. For Haryana and Chandigarh, IMD predicted light to moderate rainfall in a few places on Jan 22, rain in many places on Jan 23, and rainfall in isolated places on Jan 24. This indicates that the wet spell is expected to peak on Jan 23, with more widespread rainfall activity across both Punjab and Haryana. The weather office also flagged the possibility of hailstorm at isolated locations, which could affect standing crops, vehicles and weak structures. IMD said hailstorm activity is likely on Jan 22 over Punjab, and on Jan 23 over Punjab and Haryana,

including Chandigarh. In addition, the department issued a heavy rainfall warning for isolated locations in northern Punjab on Jan 23, suggesting chances of strong short-duration showers. Separately, IMD also issued a fog forecast warning that dense fog is likely on Jan 21, 24 and 25 over parts of Punjab and Haryana. Fog conditions, especially during early morning hours, may reduce visibility and worsen road safety on motorways and key arterial routes. On temperature trends, IMD said there may be no major change in minimum temperature during the next 24 hours, after which it may rise by 2-4 degrees Celsius over the subsequent 48 hours. This short-lived increase, it said, may be followed by a fall thereafter, depending on how the system moves and how cloud cover changes post-rainfall. Cautioning that gusty winds and hailstorm events can cause damage, the IMD urged people to take preventive steps. It

warned of the breaking of small tree branches, and risks from flying debris and loose objects, apart from possible disruptions in basic services such as electricity and water supply. IMD also flagged possible traffic congestion and accidents due to slippery roads and low visibility, particularly if dense fog coincides with rainfall. People were advised to move indoors during thunderstorms, avoid taking shelter under trees, and stay away from electric poles and power lines. Those caught outdoors during hail were advised to protect their head, while residents were also asked not to touch metallic objects, water taps or pipes during lightning. Farmers were advised not to keep harvested crops in the open and to avoid fertiliser and pesticide application during the spell. The IMD said district-wise warnings were shared with concerned authorities along with an impact-based advisory,

and urged local administrations to stay prepared.

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868 drunken driving challans issued on New Year's Eve in Delhi

New Delhi: The Delhi Traffic Police issued 868 challans for drunken driving on New Year's Eve, an officer said on Thursday. Special enforcement teams were deployed across arterial roads, nightlife hubs and residential clusters to curb drunk driving, speeding, motorcycle stunts and other dangerous violations, he said. Breathalyser tests were conducted at multiple checkpoints through the night, with teams rotating locations to deter motorists from evading checks.

In addition to traffic enforcement, the Delhi Police

NAME CHANGE

I, Jagdish Yadav S/O Rakesh Singh

R/O Jauri Kalan Jor(24), Janala,

Gurgaon, Haryana (122503), Have

Change My Name to Jagdish.

NAME CHANGE

I, Shivam S/o Rajesh Gupta, R/o H No: 82, Ward No: 35, Near Railway Station, Janta Colony, Rohtak -124001, Haryana have changed my name to Shivam Gupta for all intents and purposes.

NAME CHANGE

I, hitherto known as Raju Madan Chederi S/O Abumir R/O E-161, Industries Kavi Nagar, Ghaziabad -201002 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Manir Hossain.

NAME CHANGE

I hitherto known as Subham Rai alias Ashish Rai S/O Dhaneshwar Rai R/O R/O A-54, Block-A, Near Hindi Bhawan, Lohia Nagar, Ghaziabad, UP-201001, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Ashish Rai.

NAME CHANGE

I Sushma W/o Sushan Raj Hegde R/o No-243 Near Naga Bari, Bonthi Varamballi Village, PO-Brahmavara, Dist-Udupi, Karnataka - 576213, have changed my name to Sushma Hegde.

NAME CHANGE

I, Makani Bharath S/o Sri Muniwasan R/o No-48, 10th A Main, 1st Block Jayanagar, Bangalore South, PO-Jayanagar Iii Block, Dist-Bengaluru, Karnataka - 560011, have changed my minor daughter's name from Aisha M Bharath aged 11 years to Aishani Bharath forever

NAME CHANGE

I Subbappa Gaddedavarmath W/o Satish M G R/o Vidyा Chetan, Chidambara Nagar, VTC- Guttal, District- Haveri, Karnataka - 581108, have changed my name to Chandrika R S

NAME CHANGE

I Twinkle U Jain W/o Shubham Bohra R/o Flat No-601, Platinum Anand Apartment, 6th Floor, Bull Temple RD, Mahantara Layout, Kempegowda Nagar, Bangalore South, PO-Gavipuram Extension, Dist-Bengaluru, Karnataka - 560019, have changed my name to Twinkle Bohra

NAME CHANGE

I Lakshmi Singh S/o Bihari Lal R/o A30, Nehru Vihar, Timar Pur, Delhi have changed my name to Lakshmi Singh for all future purposes.

NAME CHANGE

I TANNU KUMARI W/o SAKSHAM VIJH R/o W-178, Meenakshi Garden, Tilak Nagar S.O. DIST: West Delhi, Delhi-110018 have changed my name to TANNU for all future purposes.

NAME CHANGE

I Saira Sagheer D/o Sagheer Ahmad R/o Musi Ahmad, 1/47, B-Block, Agar Nagar, Prem Nagar 111, Kiran Suleman Nagar, North West Delhi, Delhi-110006 have changed my name to Saira Bano for all future purposes.

NAME CHANGE

I Usha Sanjay W/o Sanjay Kumar Subramanian, R/o House no-343, DDA SFS Flats; sector-5, Pocket-1, Dwarka, Post Office Dwarka Sec-6, South West Delhi, Delhi-110075 have changed my name to Usha Lakshmanan for all future purposes.

NAME CHANGE

I PARSHANT S/o SURENDER JAIN R/o G-17/33, 1ST FLOOR SECTOR 15 ROHINI , DIST: NORTH West Delhi, Delhi-110008 have changed my name to PARSHANT JAIN for all future purposes.

NAME CHANGE

I is for general information that I, SUBHASH CHANDER SHARMA S/o HARIRAM SHARMA, R/o G-1/2, Gali No. 17, Main Road, near Durga Mandir, Shastri Park, Seelampur, East Delhi, Delhi-110053, declare that name of mine has been wrongly written as SUBHASH CHANDER in my Service Records. The actual name of mine is SUBHASH CHANDER SHARMA respectively, which may be amended accordingly.

NAME CHANGE

I hitherto known as BIMLESH W/O RAJESH R/O 68, T Huts Kabin Nagar, Rana PRATAP Bagh, North Delhi, Delhi-110007 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Bimlesh Kaur.

NAME CHANGE

I is for general information that I, VIKAS SHOKEEN S/O JAI PRAKASH SHOKEEN R/o House No.89, Najafgarh, Dindar Pur, South West Delhi, Delhi-110043, declare that name of my father and my mother has been wrongly written as JAI PRAKASH and ANITA in my 10th Marksheet. The actual name of my father and my mother are JAI PRAKASH SHOKEEN and ANITA SHOKEEN respectively, which may be amended accordingly.

NAME CHANGE

I hitherto known as Asdar Poor W/o Late Tarneet Singh R/o W-245, First Floor Gali No.6, Krishna Park, New Delhi-110018 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Harandeep Kaur.

NAME CHANGE

I, MAMTA W/O DEEPAK KASHYAP R/O Khasa No 544/2, Near Phool Singh Bugi Wala, Nehru Enclave, Ali Pur, North West Delhi, Delhi-110036 have changed the name of my minor daughter RIYA aged 12 years and She shall hereafter be known as RIYA KASHYAP.

NAME CHANGE

I Paltin Bai Netam W/o Khorobha Netam R/o House Number 68, Ward Number 05, Chhachan Pahari, Rajnandgaon, Chhattisgarh - 491665, have changed my name to Paltin Bai.

NAME CHANGE

I, hitherto known as KANNU D/o OM PRAKASH R/o House No 19, Gautam Puri, Gautam Buddha Nagar, Dadri, Uttar Pradesh-203207 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as KANISHKA.

NAME CHANGE

I, Ajay Kumar S/o Nand Kishor R/o House No- 75, Ashoka Green Residency, Greater Noida West, Sector-1, Bishrak, PO: I. A. Surajpur, Dist: Gautam Buddha Nagar Uttar Pradesh -20306, have changed the name of my son Son Atul aged 01 years and he shall hereafter be known as YUVRAJ.

NAME CHANGE

I, AJAY KUMAR S/O Nand Kishor R/o House No- 75, Ashoka Green Residency, Greater Noida West, Sector-1, Bishrak, PO: I. A. Surajpur, Dist: Gautam Buddha Nagar Uttar Pradesh -20306, have changed the name of my son Son Atul aged 01 years and he shall hereafter be known as YUVRAJ.

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NAME CHANGE

I, AJAY KUMAR S/O Nand K

NEWS BOX

Bangladesh Launches Campaigns For First Post-Sheikh Hasina Polls

CAPE CANAVERAL. (Agency)

Bangladesh begins official campaigning on Thursday for hugely anticipated general elections next month, the first since the 2024 uprising ended the autocratic rule of Sheikh Hasina. The South Asian nation of 170 million people votes on February 12 for 350 lawmakers, ushering in new leadership after prolonged political turmoil following the overthrow of Hasina's government, reshaping domestic and regional power dynamics. It comes against the backdrop of insecurity -- including the murder last month of a student leader of the anti-Hasina protests -- as well as warnings of a "flood" of online disinformation. European Union election observers say the vote will be the "biggest democratic process of 2026". Mass rallies are expected with hundreds of thousands of supporters gathering, as the frontrunners the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and the largest Islamist party, Jamaat-e-Islami, formally launch their campaigns. Sufi Shrine BNP chief and prime ministerial hopeful Tarique Rahman, 60, who returned to Bangladesh in December after 17 years in exile, is due to address a string of rallies starting in the north-eastern city of Sylhet. Rahman assumed formal leadership of the BNP after the death in December of his mother, 80-year-old former prime minister Khaleda Zia.

Bangladesh, home to one of the world's largest Muslim-majority populations, has a significant Sufi following, and parties have traditionally launched campaigns in Sylhet, home to the centuries-old shrine of Shah Jalal.

Several Missing After Landslides Hit New Zealand Campground

World. (Agency)

A landslide smashed into a campsite in rain-swept northern New Zealand on Thursday, leaving multiple people missing under tonnes of mud. Mounds of earth buried and crushed a shower block at the campsite, which lies at the foot of extinct volcano Mount Maunganui, video and photo images on local media showed. Voices were briefly heard calling for help from beneath the rubble, witnesses and emergency officials said. "Whilst the land's still moving there, they're in a rescue mission," Assistant Police Commissioner Tim Anderson told reporters at the scene. "I can't be drawn on numbers. What I can say is that it is single figures." The landslip hit several camper vans and the shower block at the camp, which lies on the North Island in an area lashed by heavy overnight rain. Visiting Canadian tourist Dion Siluch, 34, said he was relaxing at the now-evacuated Mount Hot Pools complex by the mountain when it hit. "I was in a massage at that mountain pools and the whole room started shaking," he told AFP.

"When I walked out, there was a caravan in the pool, and there's a mudslide that missed me by about 30 feet," Siluch said. "It was all very confusing. I wasn't sure if someone had driven off the road and into the pool. It took me a while to realise that the mountain had collapsed and had pushed everything into the pool."

People Screaming'

The tourist said he had seen another landslip about an hour earlier but took little notice. Police later arrived by helicopter and told people to evacuate, Siluch said.

Immigration Officers Have Power To Enter Homes Without Judicial Warrant: US Memo

World. (Agency)

Federal immigration officers are asserting sweeping power to forcibly enter people's homes without a judge's warrant, according to an internal Immigration and Customs Enforcement memo obtained by The Associated Press, marking a sharp reversal of longstanding guidance meant to respect constitutional limits on government searches.

The memo authorizes ICE officers to use force to enter a residence based solely on a more narrow administrative warrant to arrest someone with a final order of removal, a move that advocates say collides with Fourth Amendment protections and upends years of advice given to immigrant communities.

The shift comes as the Trump administration dramatically expands immigration arrests nationwide, deploying thousands of officers under a mass deportation campaign that is already reshaping enforcement tactics in cities such as Minneapolis.

For years, immigrant advocates, legal aid groups and local governments have urged people not to open their doors to immigration agents unless they are shown a warrant signed by a judge. That guidance is rooted in Supreme Court rulings that generally prohibit law enforcement from entering a home without judicial approval. The ICE directive directly undercuts that advice at a time when arrests are accelerating under the administration's immigration crackdown. The memo itself has not been widely shared within the agency, according to a whistleblower complaint, but its contents have been used to train new ICE officers who are being deployed into cities and towns to implement the president's immigration crackdown. New ICE hires and those still in training are being told to follow the memo's guidance instead of written training materials that actually contradict the memo, according to the whistleblower disclosure. It is unclear how broadly the directive has been applied in immigration enforcement operations. The Associated Press witnessed ICE officers ramming through the front door of the home of a Liberian man, Garrison Gibson, with a deportation order from 2023 in Minneapolis on Jan. 11, wearing heavy tactical gear and with their rifles drawn.

Venezuela's interim president Delcy Rodriguez to visit US

Delcy Rodriguez would be the first sitting Venezuelan president to visit the United States in more than a quarter century -- aside from presidents attending United Nations meetings in New York.

SEOUL. (Agency)

Venezuela's interim president will soon visit the United States, a senior US official said Wednesday, further signaling President Donald Trump's willingness to embrace the oil-rich country's new leader. Delcy Rodriguez would be the first sitting Venezuelan president to visit the United States in more than a quarter century -- aside from presidents attending United Nations meetings in New York. She said Wednesday that she approached any dialogue with the United States "without fear." "We are in a process of dialogue, of working with the United States, without any fear, to confront our differences and difficulties...and to address them through diplomacy," said Rodriguez. The invitation

reflects a head-snapping shift in relations between Washington and Caracas since US Delta Force operatives swooped into Caracas, seized president Nicolas Maduro and spirited him to a US jail to face narcotics trafficking charges.

Rodriguez was a former vice president and long-time insider in Venezuela's authoritarian and anti-American government, before changing tack as interim president. She is still the subject of US sanctions, including an asset freeze.

Rodriguez on Wednesday began reorganizing the leadership of the country's military forces, appointing 12 senior officers to regional commands. As a flotilla of US warships remains off the Venezuelan coast, she has allowed the United States to broker the sale of Venezuelan oil, facilitated foreign investment and released dozens of political prisoners. A senior White House official said Rodriguez would visit soon, but no date has been set. All for oil? The last bilateral visit by a sitting Venezuelan president came in the 1990s -- before populist leader Hugo Chavez took power. Since then, successive Venezuelan governments have made a point of thumbing their nose at Washington and building close ties with US foes in



China, Cuba, Iran and Russia. The US trip, which has yet to be confirmed by Venezuelan authorities, could pose problems for Rodriguez inside the government -- where some hardliners still detest what they see as Washington's hemispheric imperialism. Interior Minister Diosdado Cabello and Defense Minister Vladimir Padrino Lopez remain powerful forces in the country, and analysts say their support for Rodriguez is not a given. Cabello on his weekly state television program Wednesday night denied reports he had met with US officials ahead of Maduro's ouster. "It's a campaign. They say, 'Diosdado met with the United States'...I haven't met with anyone," he said. Trump has so far appeared happy to

allow Rodriguez and much of the repressive government to remain in power, so long as the United States has access to Venezuelan oil -- the largest proven reserves in the world. Trump hosted Venezuela's exiled opposition leader and Nobel peace laureate Maria Corina Machado at the White House earlier this month. After initially dismissing Machado and her ability to control the country's powerful armed forces and intelligence services, he said Tuesday that he would "love" to have her "involved in some way." Machado's party is widely considered to have won 2024 elections that Washington said were stolen by Maduro. Analysts say Trump's embrace of Rodriguez and avoidance of wholesale regime change can be explained by an unwillingness to repeat mistakes made in the overthrow of Saddam Hussein in Iraq. "Those kinds of intervention operations -- and the deployment of troops for stabilization -- have always ended very badly," said Benigno Alarcon, a politics expert at the Andres Bello Catholic University in Caracas. Trump's stance has however angered democracy activists who argue that all political prisoners must be freed and granted amnesty.

Kirtida Mekani, Singapore's 'tree lady', dies at 66

World. (Agency)

Kirtida Mekani, who came from Karnataka and became one of Singapore's most influential champions of environmental sustainability, community service and cultural heritage, has passed away after suffering a massive heart attack. She was 66. A recipient of the President's Award for environment work and an inductee of the Singapore Women's Hall of Fame in 2024, Mekani's legacy is woven into the island's green spaces, community gardens, educational institutions and cultural landmarks, reported online tabloid tabla! The sudden passing off "Tree Lady", as she was affectionately called, on January 19 has left a profound void in Singapore's environment, arts, and civic communities -- circles she shaped quietly yet decisively for more than three decades. Mekani's lifelong love for nature began in childhood on her family's farm in Karnataka. A simple yet transformative moment -- discovering how a "smelly" compost

pit turned into fertile soil -- opened her eyes to nature's regenerative power. That early lesson stayed with her, shaping a philosophy that nature, if



understood and respected, could teach humanity how to live sustainably. When she moved to Singapore with her husband Bharat Mekani in 1990, she was immediately struck by the greenery along the drive from the Changi Airport. That image, she often recalled, planted a seed that would later blossom into one of Singapore's most successful citizen-led environmental initiatives. In 1993, Mekani became the founding executive director of the Singapore

Environment Council, where she spent four years designing and implementing more than 50 environmental protection and education programmes for schools, businesses, and communities. Even after stepping down, she remained deeply involved in grassroots environmental education, mentoring young leaders, and advising organisations. Her proudest achievement was the Plant-A-Tree Programme, launched in 2007 in partnership with Singapore's National Parks Board under the Garden City Fund here. The idea initially faced scepticism, with doubts over whether the public would participate. Mekani persisted -- convinced Singaporeans would respond if given the chance to connect personally with nature. She was right. Since its inception, the programme has seen over 76,000 trees planted, introduced more than 200 native species, and involved over 100,000 participants from all walks of life. It remains one of Singapore's most enduring citizen-driven green initiatives.

After Minneapolis, Democrats confront political vulnerabilities as they battle Trump on immigration

WASHINGTON. (Agency)

Democrats had planned to campaign in the midterm elections on affordability and health care, two issues where Americans are particularly unhappy with President Donald Trump. But the aggressive immigration crackdown in Minnesota, including the killing of Renee Good during a confrontation with federal agents, has scrambled the party's playbook. Now Democrats are trying to translate visceral outrage into political strategy, even though there's little consensus on how to press forward on issues where the party has recently struggled to earn voters' trust. Some Democrats want to abolish Immigration and Customs Enforcement, a proposal that echoes "defund the police" rhetoric from Trump's first term, and impeach administration officials such as

Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem. Others have taken a different approach, introducing legislation intended to curb alleged abuses by federal agents. But those ideas have been criticized by activists as insufficient, and there is mounting pressure to obstruct funding for deportations. "We're Democrats. I'm sure we're going to have 50 different ideas and 50 different ways to say it," said Chuck Rocha, a party strategist who is advising several House and Senate candidates on immigration this year. If Democrats fail to strike the right balance, they could imperil their efforts to retake control of Congress and statehouses around the country. They could also hamper a chance to rebuild credibility with voters whose dissatisfaction with border enforcement under Democratic

President Joe Biden helped return Trump, a Republican, to the White House. Neera Tanden, president of the Center for American Progress and Biden's former domestic policy adviser, believes the party can thread the needle. "It's not too much to ask that we have a government that can produce a secure border, that can deport people who are not legally here, and that can also respect people's civil and human rights," she told The Associated Press. "This country has done that before, and it can do it again."

Violent scenes force a strong Democratic response

Immigration crackdowns have spread from city to city since Trump took office, but the latest operation in Minnesota has generated some of the most intense controversy.

Trump backs down on Greenland and cancels tariff threat after NATO agrees to future Arctic deal

World. (Agency)

President Donald Trump on Wednesday scrapped the tariffs that he threatened to impose on eight European nations to press for U.S. control over Greenland, pulling a dramatic reversal shortly after insisting he wanted to get the island "including right, title and ownership." In a post on his social media site, Trump said he had agreed with the head of NATO on a "framework of a future deal" on Arctic security, potentially defusing tension that had far-reaching geopolitical implications. He said "additional discussions" on Greenland were being held concerning the Golden Dome missile defense program, a multilayered, \$175 billion system that for the first time will put U.S. weapons in space.

Trump offered few details, saying they were still being worked out. But one idea NATO members have discussed as part of a compromise with Trump was that Denmark and the alliance would work with the U.S. to build more U.S. military bases on Greenland. That's according to a European official familiar with the matter but not authorized to comment publicly. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said it was not immediately clear if that idea was included in the framework Trump announced.

Trump has backed off tariffs before



The president has threatened tariffs before only to back away. In April, after first saying he would slap massive import levies on nations from around the world, which prompted a sharp negative market reaction, Trump eased off. But his change of heart this time came only after he used his speech at the World Economic Forum in the Swiss Alps to focus on Greenland and threatened to expand NATO, an alliance that has been among the globe's most unshakable since the early days of the Cold War. In his address, Trump said he was asking for territory that was "cold and poorly located" and that the U.S. had effectively saved Europe during World War II while declaring of NATO: "It's a very small ask compared to what we have given them for many, many decades."

Iran offers first government-issued death toll from protest crackdown, one far lower than activists

DUBAI. (Agency)

Iran offered its first government-issued death toll Wednesday following a crackdown on nationwide protests, giving a far lower figure than activists abroad as the country's theocracy tries to reassert control after unrest recalling the chaos surrounding its 1979 Islamic Revolution. State television carried statements by the Interior Ministry and the Foundation of Martyrs and Veterans Affairs, an official body providing services to families of those killed in wars, saying 3,117 people were killed. It added that 2,427 of the dead in the demonstrations that began Dec. 28 were civilians and security forces. It did not elaborate on the rest. Iran's government in the past has undercounted or not reported fatalities from unrest. The U.S.-based Human Rights Activists News Agency said the death toll early Thursday was at least 4,902, with many more feared dead. The human rights group has been accurate throughout the years on demonstrations and unrest in Iran, relying on a network of activists inside the

country that confirms all reported fatalities. Other groups similarly have offered higher numbers than the Iranian government tally. The Associated Press has been unable to independently assess the death toll, in part due to authorities cutting access to the internet and blocking international calls into the country. Iran also reportedly has limited journalists' ability locally to report on the aftermath, instead repeatedly airing claims on state television that refer to demonstrators as "rioters" motivated by America and Israel, without offering evidence to support the allegation. Meanwhile, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi issued his most-direct threat yet to the United States, warning the Islamic Republic will be "firing back with everything we have if we come under renewed attack." The comments came as Araghchi saw his invitation to the World Economic Forum in Davos rescinded over the killings, and as a U.S. aircraft carrier group moved west toward the Middle East from Asia. U.S.



fighter jets and other equipment appeared to be moving in the Mideast after a major U.S. military deployment in the Caribbean saw troops seize Venezuela's Nicolás Maduro. Protest death toll rises. The death toll exceeds that of any other round of protest or unrest in Iran in decades, and recalls the chaos surrounding the 1979 revolution that brought the Islamic Republic into being. Although there have been no protests for days, there are fears the toll could increase significantly as information gradually

emerges from a country under a government-imposed shutdown of the internet since Jan. 8. Nearly 26,500 people have also been arrested, according to the Human Rights Activists News Agency. Comments from officials have led to fears of some of those detained being put to death in Iran, one of the world's top executioners.

Mass executions and the killing of peaceful protesters have been two red lines laid down by U.S. President Donald Trump in the tensions.

Araghchi makes threat in column

Araghchi made the threat in an opinion article published by The Wall Street Journal. The foreign minister contended "the violent phase of the unrest lasted less than 72 hours" and sought again to blame armed demonstrators for the violence. Videos that made it out of Iran despite an internet shutdown appear to show security forces repeatedly using live fire to target apparently unarmed protesters, something unaddressed by Araghchi.

Bengaluru man sentenced to life for murdering wife in 2010

BENGALURU.(Agency)

The Principal City Civil and Sessions Court has sentenced one Manjunath G to rigorous life imprisonment for murdering his wife. It has also ordered him to pay a fine of Rs 10,000.

It is unfortunate that the accused, who fell in love and married Fiona Alexander, later brutally murdered her, observed Principal City Civil and Sessions Judge M Chandrashekhar Reddy, while sentencing Manjunath to rigorous life imprisonment.

Manjunath fell in love with Fiona in 2004 when she was pursuing her nursing course. Against the wishes of her parents, their marriage took place at a temple in the city in February 2004. Subsequently, her parents accepted their relationship. The accused converted to Christianity and was named Alexander. Their marriage was solemnised at a church in Valiyathura, Kerala, in August 2004. Though the couple lived and worked in Kerala for some time, they eventually returned to Bengaluru. They lived in a house at Srirampura with their son. Due to marital issues, Fiona shifted to a PG and used to visit her husband and son often. Meanwhile, Manjunath stopped working. Fiona worked in a private airline agency and supported the family.

Manjunath objected to Fiona working with the airline agency. On December 11, 2010, Manjunath, with an intention to resolve the issues, invited one Sunitha to have talks with them. When Fiona came home for talks, Manjunath demanded that she quit her job or live separately. An argument broke out between them and Manjunath threw a copper vessel at her. He picked up the vessel again and assaulted her and stabbed her several times.

Only 300 shops to be allowed on Marina Beach, 121 acres to be blue flag area: TN tells HC

CHENNAI.(Agency)

The Tamil Nadu government has informed the Madras High Court that about 121 acres on the Marina Beach has been earmarked for establishing Blue Flag project phases and only 300 shops will be allowed to run business on the beach. The submission was made by Advocate General (AG) P S Raman before a special bench of justices R Suresh Kumar and A D Jagadish Chandira on Tuesday when a case on allotment of shops on the beach came up for hearing.

The court has appointed retired Chief Justice of the Jammu and Kashmir High Court, N Paul Vasanthakumar, as monitoring officer for allotment of shops through lot method. The AG filed the 'Marina Beach Layout' map consisting of the details of the blue flag areas and shops to be located and other aspects.

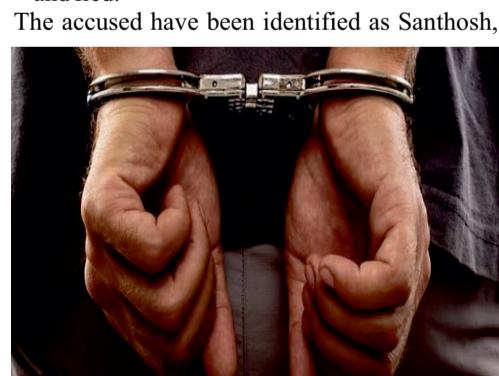
According to the map, four blue flag phases will come up on the beach with one – blue flag phase-I – already established on 25 acres and put to public use in September 2025. The Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) has proposed to establish the blue flag phase-II on 39 acres, phase-III on 23 acres and phase-IV on 35 acres.

College student assaulted by ex-partner, gang in Chennai; one held

CHENNAI.(Agency)

A 20-year-old college student was allegedly assaulted and forcibly restrained by her ex-boyfriend and his friends near Pattravakkam railway station in Ambattur on Tuesday. Radhakrishnan, a head constable attached to the Ambattur police station, who was on patrol duty, noticed the incident and intervened. During the ensuing scuffle, the accused allegedly pushed the constable to the ground and fled.

The accused have been identified as Santhosh,



Ajith and Stalin. The victim and her partner, Santhosh, had been in a relationship since school days, said an officer. However, she recently wanted to end the relationship after she learnt about Santhosh's alleged involvement in illegal activities, including drug-related offences.

On Tuesday, the accused allegedly intercepted the woman when she was returning home from college and forced her to accompany them to talk. When she resisted, they assaulted her.

Based on the victim's complaint, a case was registered. Ajit was arrested on Wednesday and remanded to judicial custody. The other two are absconding.

UP man who killed four of his family, self sent 8 voice notes to sister, was on depression drugs: Police

Voice messages to be sent to forensic analysis, say officials; funeral rites of the family held

Lucknow. (Agency)

A day after a 40-year-old man allegedly shot dead four members of his family before turning the gun on himself at his rented house in Uttar Pradesh's Saharanpur, police on Wednesday found on his phone eight voice notes he sent to his sister in a span of 15 minutes at 3 am and recovered medicines prescribed for depression and other mental health disorders.

An FIR was registered at the Sarsawa police station and a detailed investigation was launched to ascertain what drove the man, Ashok Rathi, to take the extreme step, officials said.

On Tuesday evening, the funeral rites of Rathi, a surveyor with the district administration, and the other four members of his family — his mother Vidyawati (70), wife Anjita (35), the couple's sons Kartik (16) and Dev (14) — were performed after post-mortem



examination on the bodies was completed.

The voice messages are being examined and will be sent to a forensic laboratory for further analysis, they said, adding the messages, in one of which he is heard saying "bahut badi galti ho

gayi" (I have made a huge mistake), indicate that he had already shot his family members dead. Of the eight messages, six are less than a minute long, while two are longer, investigators said. The voice notes could provide crucial clues about his state of mind and the sequence of events leading up to the tragedy, they said.

"The FIR was registered on the complaint of the deceased's family members. We are investigating where Rathi procured the weapons used in the crime from," said Saharanpur Superintendent of Police (SP) Sagar Jain. Three country-made pistols were recovered from the

spot on Tuesday, according to police. Officials said Rathi's medical history is being verified to understand if his mental health had any bearing on the incident.

Bengaluru may skip Swachh Survekshan 2025-26 as city unprepared, risks tarnishing 'Brand Bengaluru' image

BENGALURU.(Agency)

While other city corporations across the country have already begun the work for the Swachh Survekshan survey, the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) hasn't started yet, said Solid Waste Management experts.

Bengaluru ended up as the fifth dirtiest city in India last year. The erstwhile Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP), which is GBA now, ended up securing 36th national rank out of 40 in the Swachh Survekshan survey 2024-2025 rankings.

Experts are advising that Bengaluru, which is not fully prepared, should better skip the 2025-2026 survey, instead of taking part and ending up among the most dirtiest cities in



the country, affecting the 'Brand Bengaluru' image, which has already taken a severe beating due to the city's poor infrastructure and traffic.

V Ram Prasad, Solid Waste Management expert and founder of Friends of Lakes, said, "While there is provision for Bengaluru to either compete as one unit or take part as five different corporations, there is no clarity yet. In the last survey, BBMP was one corporation, which was not split into five corporations. Earlier, the survey was done only between February and March. However, the evaluation methodology has undergone a lot of change and every month, participants must update self-attested data, geotagged photos, and documents on various parameters."

Prasad, who has worked with the erstwhile BBMP related to the Swachh Survekshan, said given the condition that the participants have to update data monthly, and that the five different corporations came into existence only in September last year, it would be difficult for corporations to compete individually.

Leopard enters sweet shop building in Daman, captured after 10-hour operation

Surat .(Agency)

A leopard entered a sweet shop building in the Union Territory of Daman, triggering a over 10-hour rescue operation by around 25 forest personnel from Surat, Valsad, Daman and Dahanu in Maharashtra before it was safely captured, officials said.

According to forest department officials, the leopard was spotted in a building in Nani Daman market area on Tuesday morning. A small open passage next to the sweet shop has stairs to the upper floors of the building.

On Tuesday around 10.35 am, a woman spotted the leopard sitting on the stairs. The forest officials were informed, following which Daman and Silvassa forest officials reached the spot.

The family members on the first floor were evacuated and those on

the second floor were told to lock their main door and windows. The main road in the area was cordoned off.

The forest officials fired a shot using a tranquiliser gun. With no movement of the animal, a forest guard approached the animal, believing it to be unconscious. The leopard attacked him and injured him on the leg. The other team members rescued him and he was shifted to hospital, said a forest department official.

The Daman forest department contacted forest department officials of Valsad, Surat and Dahanu in Maharashtra and sought their help to catch the leopard. The teams arrived at Daman late in the afternoon, and a joint operation was carried out to

tranquillise the big cat. Again, the teams fired two shots from different directions. The rescue operation continued till late in the night, and finally, the leopard was successfully tranquillised. The



leopard was taken to the forest department office in Daman. Talking to The Indian Express,

Daman Deputy Conservator of Forest Harsh Raj said, "The leopard has been spotted in the nearby areas for the last two days. We have installed two cages at different locations to catch the leopard. The leopard was spotted at Haveli Sweets building in Nani Daman on Tuesday morning. The rescue operation, which started at 11.00 am, ended only at 10.30 pm."

"The captured male leopard weighs over 60 kilograms and is around 4 years old. The leopard is kept at Vasona safari in Silvassa (Union territory) where doctors are examining it," the official said.

Mumbai police oppose bail plea of BEST driver accused in Bhandup crash that killed four

Mumbai .(Agency)

The Mumbai police on Wednesday opposed the bail plea of 52-year-old BEST driver Santosh Sawant, arrested for allegedly running over pedestrians outside Bhandup railway station on December 29, an incident that claimed four lives. The police told the court that a technical report on the bus confirmed there was no mechanical defect.

Sawant had earlier sought

bail, claiming that while driving the bus on the narrow road outside the station, he lost control while attempting to save pedestrians who suddenly came in his way, leading to the accident. In its reply, however, the police said Sawant was aware that the area was crowded with commuters and others due to its proximity to the railway station, and despite this, he drove at a high speed while turning the bus, resulting in the accident.

An inspection of the BEST bus involved in the accident was received from the Regional Transport Office (RTO). It explicitly mentions — Not a Mechanical Defect," the police reply filed in court



stated. The police further informed the court that the accused had undergone a mental health evaluation at the civic-run Sion Hospital, the report of which is awaited. Reports of blood and urine samples sent to the state forensic science laboratory to determine whether the driver was under the influence of any intoxicants are also awaited, the police said.

Opposing the bail plea, the police submitted that the investigation in the case is still ongoing. The court was told that if granted bail, the accused could tamper with the probe or attempt to influence witnesses, as they reside in the same area.

Sawant has been booked under Section 105 (punishment for culpable homicide not

amounting to murder) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sahita, which carries a punishment of five to 10 years' imprisonment. "The crime is of a sensitive nature and the accident has caused public outrage in the area. If the accused is released on bail, the possibility of a law and order situation arising cannot be ruled out," the reply said.

Robbery attempt at family's bungalow: Attempt to murder us, says Puja Khedkar's father

Pune.(Agency)

DAYS AFTER five persons, including the parents of sacked probationary IAS officer Puja Khedkar, were found unconscious at their bungalow in National Housing Society in Aundh in an alleged robbery bid, her father Dilip Khedkar has claimed it was an attempt to murder them. He also alleged 'double standards' and 'lack of seriousness' by Pune police in the probe, which police refuted.

An FIR was registered by the Chatshurungi police themselves, based on the statement given by Puja Khedkar. The alleged incident took place on the intervening night of January 10 and 11. Puja told the police a recently hired domestic help and his accomplices tied and locked her in a room of her bungalow and five others, including her mother, father, watchman, cook and driver were sedated. Selected items from a cupboard were stolen. The police have named their help — who hails from Nepal — and his six to seven accomplices in the FIR. During the probe, the police arrested the father of the prime suspect and search

is on for others. Puja's father on Tuesday held a press conference in Pune in which he said, "This was an attempt to murder us. The drugs that were used for the murder attempt are the drugs that are not easily available in medical stores. To search for the anti-drugs of these sedatives, we had to go to hospitals across the city. We had to be treated in the ICU. You can go to Ruby Hall hospital and verify

what I am saying." Referring to the probes against the Khedkar family in the past, Dilip said, "When small incidents happen from our side the administration and police make such a big issue of it. A small quarrel on a farm is investigated by the Crime Branch. Ten-twelve teams are formed for the search.

The HC further refused to grant the petitioner liberty for "drop or pick up and go" as no health grounds were cited by him. "The petitioner is present in the court hall and was standing before the court during the hearing, which lasted almost 30 minutes. He appears to be able-bodied and had no difficulty standing before the court. As such, at this stage, we are not considering the request of the petitioner," the court noted. It also directed the Senior Police Inspector of MRA Marg police station to "conduct a routine review of security and should not be complacent."

'Able-bodied can walk 300 metres': HC rejects plea for vehicle entry into BSE restricted zone

Mumbai.(Agency)

Dismissing a businessman's plea seeking permission to drive his vehicle into the restricted zone around Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) on Dalal Street in south Mumbai's Fort area, the Bombay High Court last week said an "able-bodied person can surely walk from the security barricades to his office near the BSE building." The court noted that the "drop/pick up and go" facility was earlier granted to the petitioner's late father, who was advanced in age and suffered heart ailments.

It clarified that such permission can be extended only to persons with grave and serious ailments who cannot walk even 300 metres from the security barricades. A division bench led by Justice Ravindra V Ghuge on January 13 was hearing a plea by

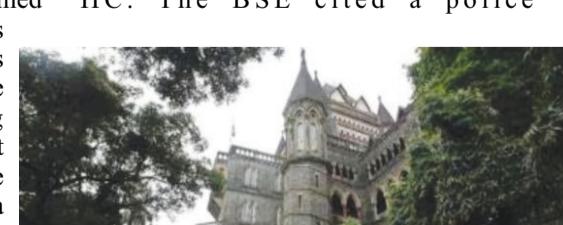
50-year-old businessman Sanjay Pukhraj Bafna, who has his office near the BSE building. Bafna, through advocates Mutahhar Khan and Yash Dhakad, claimed that the vehicle he uses to travel to his office is barred entry, despite his exclusive possession of a private parking space within the building compound. The petitioner said the court had in 2012 allowed his father to be dropped at the gates of Veena Chambers, with the vehicle leaving immediately thereafter. Moreover, after office hours, his father was allowed to be picked up from the office in the prohibited area.

The court was informed that while his father died in 2023, Bafna was told last year by the concerned police station that his vehicle would be stopped near the security

barricades unless he obtained a court order to bring it within the restricted area. Aggrieved, the petitioner approached the HC. The BSE cited a police

up by vehicle from the restricted area "extinguished" after he passed away. The bench noted even after 2023, "the security was under the impression that the deceased was travelling in the said vehicle."

The HC further refused to grant the petitioner liberty for "drop or pick up and go" as no health grounds were cited by him. "The petitioner is present in the court hall and was standing before the court during the hearing, which lasted almost 30 minutes. He appears to be able-bodied and had no difficulty standing before the court. As such, at this stage, we are not considering the request of the petitioner," the court noted. It also directed the Senior Police Inspector of MRA Marg police station to "conduct a routine review of security and should not be complacent."



communication and took the stand that entry of the petitioner's vehicle into the area should be prohibited. The court observed that the need for the petitioner's father to be dropped and picked

Changing political skylines of Mumbai

Mumbai has always been important in national politics—even before Independence, and more so in the post-Independence period. Once, the fates of Maharashtra and Gujarat—together, as parts of Bombay State till 1960—were anchored to this port city. Later, Mumbai became central to the demand for a separate linguistic state, as leaders of the Samyukta Maharashtra Movement (1956–1960) gave the call for “Mumbai saha Maharashtra” (Maharashtra with Mumbai), despite facing violent police action. Before the new state was carved out on May 1, 1960, the central government even considered making Mumbai a Union Territory or giving it to Gujarat. But Mumbai remained with Maharashtra.

Given this intense formative history linked to identity, the latest Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) election can be viewed as a major blow to the Marathi identity of the country's richest municipality. The Shiv Sena's loss of the BMC after almost three decades is seen less as a loss of resources and more as the erosion of a bastion of the ‘Marathi manoos’ (Marathi person). The tussle appears to be over the city's identity, shaped since Bal Thackeray's Shiv Sena displaced the Congress in 1997. One has to delve into the city's political economy and spatial distribution to understand how these elections may determine the future of state and national politics. Among the most notable factors is how the city's neoliberal economic model has given an upper hand to the non-Marathi-speaking population—specifically, the Gujarati-Marwari business community. While many of Mumbai's non-Marathi ghettos are swanky, they offer limited mobility for Marathi speakers because of prohibitive costs and relatively low average community incomes. Those who have not yet been forced to migrate to other municipalities within the Greater Mumbai Metropolitan Region remain confined to older buildings and chawls. Recent infrastructural developments—such as the Coastal Road, the Bandra-Kurla Complex connector bridge and the Worli Sea Link—combined with a changing skyline, have altered perceptions of Mumbai. These could be highlighted by the new mayor and corporators to project a Gujarati-centric, if not cosmopolitan, outlook, ultimately blurring the visible markers of Marathi language and culture. In the long run, this will electorally benefit the BJP's urban cadre. Another aspect of the political economy is ‘gentrification’. The groundwork has already been laid for the new BMC to expand this phenomenon. Major projects of the city's development department—including the redevelopment of chawls and other huts in Worli, Ramabai Ambedkar Nagar and Dharavi—would now be easier to execute. The political gains could be long-lasting, as these ghettos' collective aspirations historically produced voting patterns favouring the Congress, the erstwhile Republican Party of India and the Bharatiya Bahujan Mahasangh (later called the Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi). Gentrification would disrupt this pattern and disperse these voters, giving a natural advantage to monolithic party structures like the BJP's. Electorally, the BJP has been in firm control of the state since the Assembly elections of 2024. The BMC results could further push the city's real estate-driven development agenda. The central government, too, may promote Mumbai along the lines of GIFT City near Ahmedabad, with a view to woo fence-sitting Marathi voters and ensure a more complete electoral consolidation of the state.

There are two Mumbais within the city. One is the Mumbai of the Marathi working class, with limited resources and smaller housing units; the other is the wealthier Mumbai of the business community. Political competition between the two is determined not only by demographic and spatial factors, but also by the resources these communities command.

UNITED Arab Emirates President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, widely known as MbZ, made a flying visit to New Delhi on Monday. The absence of any prior indication about the visit implies that it concerned the rapidly changing geopolitical scenario in the Gulf and West Asia. The UAE, a coalition of Trucial States formed after the British exit the region in 1971, traditionally followed a status quo-based non-confrontational foreign policy. In 2002, an Indian delegation visited the UAE, when I was the Ambassador, after the terror attack on the Indian Parliament. Then President Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, MbZ's father, received the visitors.

When asked about the foreign military presence in the region, the late leader recounted an old Arab tale. A farmer was frequently losing his sheep to wolves. Someone advised him to keep dogs. He did so, only to discover that he had to kill sheep often to feed the dogs. Sheikh Zayed's message was that foreign intervention did not benefit the region. Now MbZ is an English-speaking former air force pilot and the Supreme Commander of the UAE armed forces. He has controlled foreign policy since his father's death in 2004, even when his brother was President. According to his diplomatic adviser, Anwar Gargash, the UAE's priorities are to counter extremism and promote regional security. This underscores its opposition to the Muslim Brotherhood, which is seen as an existential threat. The UAE and Saudi Arabia had resented the ouster of former Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak by the Arab Spring protesters in 2011, to which then US President Barack Obama had seemingly turned a blind eye. Both countries supported the Egyptian military to subsequently overthrow the Muslim Brotherhood government.

The Gulf and West Asia have been unstable since US President Trump's first term. The confrontation between Qatar and its two powerful neighbours, the UAE and Saudi Arabia, began soon after Trump's visit to Riyadh. Qatar was blockaded (2017–21) for supporting Islamist forces. Trump also abandoned the nuclear deal with Iran, approved by the Permanent-Five plus Germany. The UAE and Saudi Arabia are the two largest economies in West Asia. MbZ helped Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, widely known as MbS, to consolidate power. When Saudi operatives murdered Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi in Turkey in 2018 on MbS' alleged instructions, it was MbZ who handled the Americans. However, as the Saudis, the custodians of the Two Holy Mosques, consider themselves the apex of the Arab and Muslim world, Saudi-Emirati differences

gradually developed and their geopolitical visions came into conflict. In diplomacy, friendship is transitory while interests are permanent. The UAE broke the regional consensus by signing the Trump-devised Abraham Accords in 2020 and normalising relations with Israel, while the Palestinian issue remained unresolved. It began backing secessionist forces in Yemen, Somalia and Sudan, ostensibly to counter Islamist forces. These three nations lie along the Red Sea, facing Saudi Arabia and the Bab al-Mandab. The UAE's interests converged with those of Israel and the US. President Trump's

in the Red Sea region. Essentially, the Saudi and Emirati visions are at odds. The Saudis favour state-to-state engagement to stabilise domestic or regional conflicts. The UAE likes to cultivate dissident and breakaway factions, like in Yemen, if it promotes stability and controls supply routes, minerals and energy. So as the Saudis attempted to limit Emirati geopolitical play in the Arab world, MbZ made his first visit to Pakistan as President last month. The UAE Sheikhs and Pakistan have been close for decades, but Pakistan had meanwhile signed a defence deal with the Saudis. The Emiratis were

seeking to restore a balance in ties with traditional friends against the backdrop of their exposed closeness to Israel and conflict with Saudis. President Mohamed bin Zayed's trip to India must be seen in this context. PM Modi's government has invested heavily in his outreach to ruling families in the Gulf, especially those in Abu Dhabi. The Indian diaspora in the UAE numbers 3.5 million or 35 per cent of the population. As many as one-third are professionals.

The UAE is India's third-largest trading partner and second-largest export destination. In 2024–25, Indian exports were \$36.73 billion, while imports touched \$63.64 billion. Despite its small population and the local market, the UAE is the favoured entrepôt for Indian exports to the Gulf, Iran, Central Asia and even Pakistan. The UAE's cumulative FDI in India is \$22.84 billion (2000–25), a mere speck in Abu Dhabi's nearly \$1 trillion sovereign fund. The two signed an economic partnership deal in 2022. Both are members of BRICS and I2U2, a forum that comprises India, Israel, UAE and the US.

Still, the path ahead is not easy. Pathbreaking deals like the 2023 India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), which will pass through the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Israel, are stymied by the standoff between Iran and Israel-US as well as the Saudis and Emiratis. The competing visions for stability in the Gulf is split between US-Israel-UAE and Saudi Arabia-Egypt-Turkey. Pakistan is playing both sides. In this fragmented world, here is the opportunity for PM Modi to leverage India's traditional warmth with all sides and demonstrate that “Vishwaguru” is more than a phrase. India can start bridging some of the divides, beginning with Modi's substantive relationship with Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu. With large-scale protests continuing in Iran and the US moving more ships and aircrafts into India's extended neighbourhood, the situation remains fragile. President Mohamed bin Zayed's short visit to India is indicative of the churn in the Gulf and the need for India to be more proactive.



second term has exacerbated the regional churn, especially since the June 2025 Israel-US air attacks on Iranian nuclear facilities. On September 9, Israel attacked Hamas leaders' facilities in Qatar. MbZ rushed to meet the Saudi Crown Prince after a noticeable gap marked by the absence of communication. On September 15, the GCC met to review the situation. Two days later, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan signed the Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement, with a clause mirroring NATO's Article 5, about an attack on one nation being considered as an attack on both. Soon enough, Yemen became a flashpoint. Early on till 2019, the UAE had joined Saudi Arabia in military operations in Yemen, but later preferred to support Yemeni rebel factions; the Saudis continued to back government forces. Reportedly, Israeli intelligence was positioned on UAE-controlled Yemeni island Socotra. While in Africa, Israel recognised Somaliland, a breakaway part of Somalia—the Emiratis are developing a port there. The Saudis retaliated strongly, telling the UAE to withdraw its forces from Yemen and bombing the military equipment sent by UAE. Egypt, the other big Arab power, began to speak in favour of the Saudis—both clearly wanted to restrict Israeli strategic expansion

HP govt must take tourists to task for defying advisories

The Tribune Editorial: Tourism cannot be a free pass for rash and incautious conduct, certainly not in the hills.



to support human weight. Tourism cannot be a free pass

for rash and incautious conduct, certainly not in the hills. Respect for the topography, cultural norms, local sensitivities—each aspect is vital for the host as well as the guest. That's what makes the journey special. Fiddle with it, and the results can be disastrous.

The time has come for the Himachal tourism authorities, the law enforcement agencies and all the stakeholders to spell out in clear terms what is simply not acceptable. A standard quick response mechanism is perhaps the only solution to tackle unruly activities, including hooliganism, that are threatening to disturb a tourism ecosystem that's been carefully nurtured over decades. Weather, road and safety advisories carry enormous weight in the mountains.

The defiance by some, of late, is deeply disturbing. If stringent action is what it takes to instil discipline and enforce order, the state government must not think twice.

Name game is an insult to Dyal Singh's legacy

Mobilising public opinion against the proposal to rename the college would be a true tribute to Dyal Singh Majithia.

SARDAR Dyal Singh Majithia (1848–98) was a great philanthropist, champion of intellectual freedom and social worker. He established three Trusts—the Tribune Trust, the College Trust and the Library Trust. He was also the founder of The Tribune (February 1881) and Punjab National Bank (May 1894). Dyal Singh College, Lahore, was established in 1910 by the Dyal Singh College Trust Society, as per the instructions in Article 8 of Majithia's will. Currently, it is known as Government Dyal Singh College, Lahore, and is among the best colleges in Pakistan.

After Independence, most of the assets of the Dyal Singh College Trust Society remained in Lahore. The Trust faithfully carried forward Majithia's legacy, will and ideology, establishing Dyal Singh College, Karnal (1949), Dyal Singh Public Library, Delhi (1954–55), and Dyal Singh Evening College, Delhi (1958). Dewan Anand Kumar, founding Vice-Chancellor of Panjab University, Chandigarh, played a crucial role in establishing these educational institutions. His father, Raja Narendra Nath, was Majithia's associate.

Facing a financial crisis, the Trust had to sell land of the Karnal college and establish Dyal Singh Colony. However, the crisis deepened. As a result, in 1978, Dyal Singh College (Morning and Evening) was transferred to Delhi University (DU) through an agreement, and the Trust did not receive any compensation in return. According to Clause 12 of the agreement, “the institution will continue to be known as Dyal Singh College”. It is clear that no individual or government has the right to alter the terms of the pact.

As per data for the 2025–26 academic session, there are over 6,000 students in the morning college and around 3,000 in the evening college. The controversy surrounding the name change is not new. In November

2017, Amitabh Sinha, then Chairman of the Dyal Singh College Governing Body, announced that Dyal Singh Evening College would be renamed Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya College. However, the proposal did not go through. On November 17, 2017, he succeeded in getting a proposal passed by the college's Governing Body to rename the institution as Vande Mataram Mahavidyalaya and turn it into a morning college; the final approval was to be given by the Vice-Chancellor of the university. The move triggered a controversy.

Leaders of the Shiromani Akali Dal, then a BJP ally, as well as the Congress, condemned the decision. Manjinder Singh Sira (an MLA who served as general secretary of the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee), and Tarlochan Singh, ex-MP, demanded that the proposal be withdrawn.

Avtar Singh Makkar, then president of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, also opposed the move. Akali leader Harsimrat Kaur Badal, then a minister in the BJP-led NDA government, said the proposed name was “unacceptable”. Punjab's former Deputy CM Sukhbir Singh Badal called it “unnecessary and mischievous” and urged the Prime Minister to intervene. This decision was also slammed by academics and journalists. A meeting in this regard was convened on November 27, 2017, at Gurdwara Rakab Ganj Sahib in Delhi, chaired by renowned journalist Kuldip Nayar. On December 8, 2017, we held a press conference and described this step as an insult to a great personality. I had a detailed telephone conversation



Union Minister for Human Resource Development, Prakash Javadekar, told the MPs that the decision to rename Dyal Singh Evening College was not taken by the Central government. Therefore, he announced a stay on the Governing Body's decision. On December 26, 2025, on the occasion of Veer Bal Diwas, DU Vice-Chancellor Yogesh Singh raised the issue of renaming Dyal Singh Evening College. He said, “We want to

rename Dyal Singh Evening College after Banda Singh Bahadur.” He used the word “we”, which implies that he is not the only player in this name-change game. DU officials argue that having two colleges named after Dyal Singh causes confusion among students. However, no such confusion has been witnessed for the

past over six decades. The current situation is completely different from that of 2017. At that time, the proposal to change the name came from the Governing Body of Dyal Singh Evening College, but the 2025 proposal is from the Vice-Chancellor, and its approval will be sought from the Delhi University Executive Council. Based on my long experience in the field of education, I have observed that most members of college and university executive councils are yes-men who have their own axe to grind. The Dyal Singh Evening College Staff Association unanimously passed a resolution opposing the Vice-Chancellor's proposal. According to the resolution, “This college has long been associated with the esteemed Sardar Dyal Singh Majithia and his memory. All teachers, non-teaching staff and students

are deeply attached to this name. We have to say that such an important decision has been taken without prior consultation with the stakeholders. This matter was neither discussed in the Staff Council nor shared with the Staff Association.” According to NN Vohra, former Governor of Jammu & Kashmir and Chairman of The Tribune Trust, any move to change the college's name would be “extremely inappropriate and ill-advised”.

NEWS BOX

CCTV traps fully grown leopard inside residential house in Shimla

Shimla. (Agency)

A fully grown leopard was caught on CCTV entering a residential house in Navbhar on the outskirts of Shimla late Wednesday night, triggering panic among residents and once again highlighting the growing threat of human-wildlife conflict in the state capital. According to CCTV footage that has surfaced, the leopard entered the residential building at around 11:23 pm on January 21. The visuals show the animal calmly climbing the staircase and reaching the second floor of the house.

There was no sign of aggression or panic in its movement. After failing to find any prey, the leopard quietly descended the stairs and exited the building.

The house is reportedly owned by Nandini Pathania. At the time of the incident, all members of the family were present inside the house. Fortunately, the leopard did not harm anyone, averting what could have been a major tragedy in the densely populated locality.

This is not the first such incident in Shimla. On earlier occasions, leopards have been caught on CCTV cameras preying on pet dogs in residential areas of the town.

However, residents said this was the first time a leopard was seen entering a multi-storey residential house in the Navbhar area, which is surrounded by forest cover.

The incident has caused fear and anxiety among residents, especially working people who return home late at night. Leopard sightings on roads and streets in Navbhar and nearby localities have become increasingly frequent in recent years, raising serious safety concerns.

Chandigarh-Shimla Helicopter services on Rs 3169 per passenger

Shimla. (Agency)

Tourists could now board Helicopter service to Shimla from Chandigarh for less than a taxi fare, as the state launched Helitaxi Services on Wednesday, likely to give a major fillip to the air connectivity of the hill destinations. The move is aimed at improving accessibility, promoting tourism, and providing faster travel options in the difficult mountainous terrain.

According to official information, the fare for the helicopter service between Chandigarh and Shimla has been fixed at Rs 3,169 per passenger.

The service will operate three days a week—Monday, Friday, and Saturday—providing a time-saving alternative to the long and often congested road journey between the two capitals.

For intra-state connectivity, the fare from Shimla (Sanjoli Helipad) to Kullu-Manali has been set at Rs 3,500 per passenger, while the fare from Shimla to Reckong Peo in tribal Kinnaur district has been fixed at Rs 4,000 per passenger. These services would operate regularly, enhancing connectivity to remote and strategically important regions.

The helicopter services on the Shimla-Kullu and Shimla-Reckong Peo routes are being operated daily, making them especially useful for tourists, government officials, and local residents who otherwise face long travel hours due to challenging road conditions.

In addition, the government is considering expanding heli services to other routes, including Shimla-Dharamshala-Reckong Peo and Shimla-Manali, covering all major helipads in the state.

Proposals in this regard have already been forwarded to the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) for approval.

DoT additional DGT inspects 5G use case lab at NIT Hamirpur

Hamirpur (HP). (Agency)

Additional Director General of Telecommunications (Addl. DGT) and Joint Advisor Anil Kumar Gupta visited the 5G Use Case Lab at the National Institute of Technology (NIT) Hamirpur.

During his visit, he reviewed the lab's utilization, progress, and ongoing activities. Anil Kumar Gupta stated that the objective of the 5G Use Case Labs is to develop proficiency and engagement in 5G technologies among students and the academic community in higher education institutions. He explained that these labs provide undergraduate and postgraduate students with the opportunity to undertake projects in a real-world 5G environment and are also accessible to startups, MSMEs, and other companies in the vicinity of the institution.

He was accompanied by Sandeep Arya, Deputy Director General (Technology), DoT, and Ramesh Kumar, Assistant Director (Technology), DoT. They interacted with faculty members and students and observed the technical infrastructure and academic activities being conducted under the 5G ecosystem at the institute.

Anil Kumar Gupta, Additional Director General of Telecommunications (Addl. DGT) and Joint Advisor, Himachal Pradesh Licensed Service Area (LSA), Department of Telecommunications (DoT), highlighted that the 5G Use Case Labs, established under a flagship initiative of the Department of Telecommunications, have been set up as innovation hubs in higher education institutions across the country to promote experimentation, testing, and development of 5G-based applications and solutions.

The Sikh Times
Manoj Pal

Muzaffarnagar. A farmers' and laborers' village meeting was organized in Kukra village under the "Developed India – Jai Shri Ram" public awareness campaign. Speaking at the event, BJP National General Secretary Arun Singh launched a scathing attack on the Congress and Samajwadi Party, stating that their politics have always been based on lies, deception, and appeasement. He said that whenever these parties came to power, they treated villages, farmers, and laborers merely as vote banks, while the BJP has made them partners in development. Before the program, workers, led by City MLA and State Minister Kapil Dev Agarwal and BJP District President Sudhir Saini, gave Arun Singh a grand welcome. He was taken on a tour of the village in a tractor-trolley. Later, at the village meeting, he discussed the central and state government schemes, saying that the opposition is questioning development today because they have nothing to show for their own time in power. Arun Singh said that the "Jai Shri Ram" scheme is a major step towards the development of villages, which will expand roads, drains, streetlights, public buildings, community halls, and other

essential facilities in rural areas. He said that it will increase employment opportunities for laborers and benefit farmers as well.

ing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of a developed India to every village and will transform the face of rural India. District

cials and workers present pledged to strengthen the resolve for a developed India and to take the scheme to every village.



Furthermore, the entire process being online will curb corruption and eliminate middlemen. On this occasion, Minister Kapil Dev Agarwal said that the "Jai Shri Ram" scheme will play a crucial role in tak-

President Sudhir Saini said that the public is now aware and will not give another chance to those forces that have only given speeches and pushed the country backward for years. At the end of the program, the offi-

Former MP Sohanveer Singh, Municipal Chairperson Meenakshi Swaroop, former MLA Umesh Malik, and several other BJP officials and workers were present on the occasion.

Blackout Mock Drill in Muzaffarnagar Today, Blackout from 6 PM for 15 Minutes

The Sikh Times
Manoj Pal

Muzaffarnagar. A blackout mock drill is being conducted today in the district by the district administration and Civil Defence as part of preparations to deal with emergencies such as an air raid. This exercise will be held from 6:00 PM to 6:15 PM at DAV Inter College, Arya Samaj Road, Muzaffarnagar, and the surrounding area. According to the administration, an air raid warning siren will be sounded during the mock drill, and the power supply will be switched off for 10-15 minutes. During this time, police, fire brigade, and other departmental vehicles may be seen patrolling the area with their sirens on. The administration has appealed to citizens not to panic, as this is only a drill. The Civil Defence has requested the residents of the district to switch off all lights in their homes and establishments during the specified time and ensure that no light is visible from outside. They have also been advised not to use torches, mobile phone flashes, or any other lights. If any light is visible from a building, it should be covered with black paper or cloth. The administration stated that the purpose of this mock drill is to make people aware of vigilance and safety measures during emergency situations, so that loss of life can be prevented in the event of a future crisis.

Arvind Kejriwal & Bhagwant Mann's health guarantee stands fulfilled in Punjab

Contd.....Front page

"In the next four to five months, 2,500 'Find Clinics' will be opened in every village. The work that previous governments did in 75 years, this government has perhaps done ten times that in just four years," Arvind Kejriwal asserted. Arvind Kejriwal stated that the primary health centers of previous governments were locked up, with dogs roaming inside. "That is what their health centers were like. But the mohalla clinics that have now been built are splendid and air-conditioned," he stated. He added, "Those who have received treatment there know how good they are. When you go there, it doesn't feel like a government hospital, but like a private clinic. Now mohalla clinics are opening far and wide, in villages everywhere." The AAP Head further said that earlier, Punjab government hospitals faced a severe shortage of doctors. Over the past four years, 1100 specialist doctors have been recruited, and now there is no shortage of doctors in government hospitals. "Earlier, machines did not work, but now all machines have been installed and each one is functioning properly," he said. He continued to highlight that earlier, medicines were not available, but now medicine distribution counters have opened and people are receiving free medicines. "Government hospitals have been made excellent," he stated. The AAP National Convenor said that sometimes a disease becomes so serious that one has to go to a private hospital. "Many people choose private hospitals for treatment. Therefore, today such a Yojna (Scheme) is being implemented under which the best and most premium private hospitals of Punjab, where even the richest people go for treatment, will now also be accessible to the poorest farmers, laborers, and rickshaw pullers. They will not need to worry about money," he continued. Arvind Kejriwal said that a farmer works extremely hard under the scorching sun to grow food for all of us, but if someone in his family falls ill, he has to mortgage his land. He continued, "He ends up selling his land and jewelry, loses his house, and even then there is no guarantee that the patient will survive. Even for the smallest illness, if someone goes to a private hospital, the minimum package is 2 lakhs to 3 lakhs, and the person is completely ruined. But now people need not worry." Arvind Kejriwal further explained that this is a 10 lakh rupee insurance scheme. "People can go to any hospital, whether government or private. The government has already started fixing everything, and soon government hospitals will become even better than private ones. But for now, patients can go anywhere," he said. He further continued, "For both major and minor illnesses, all medicines and tests up to 20 lakhs will be free. As soon as a patient is admitted to a hospital, everything will be free. They will not be asked anything, only to bring their health card. There are about 65 lakh families in Punjab, including rich and poor, Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, and people of all religions and castes. No one has been left out." He said that governments usually impose many conditions, but they have imposed none. "Everyone is human, everyone is Punjabi, and everyone is Indian, so why exclude anyone? This card is for everyone, and 65 lakh families will benefit directly," he asserted. Arvind Kejriwal said to recall the time of the past four years and before that, when Congress, Akali Dal, and BJP governments were in power. He pointed out that Punjab was full of drugs, and said, "Their big ministers used to sell drugs and distribute them through their government vehicles." He recalled that when major drug traffickers were arrested, they named these very ministers, saying that so-and-so minister was running the drug trade. He said that for the first time, a government has shown the courage to arrest corrupt ministers and send them to jail. But he felt deeply saddened that when that minister was arrested, all these parties came together and started abusing. "They abused the AAP, Bhagwant Mann, and Arvind Kejriwal, saying that human rights were being violated," he said. The AAP Chief questioned, "When Punjab's children were dying due to drugs and their futures were being destroyed, were their human rights not being violated? Now when action is taken against criminals, human rights are suddenly being violated?" He said that these people do not love anyone. "This is all their business. Bhagwant Mann has shut down their business. Those who sell drugs belong to these very parties, their followers, and their relatives. Now that drug traffickers are being caught and a war has been launched against gangsters, these parties are abusing and saying that human rights are being violated." Arvind Kejriwal said, "They care about gangsters and extortionists, not about Punjabis. When ordinary people receive extortion calls and are threatened that their children will be killed if they don't pay, these people don't remember human rights. The public must stay alert against these parties and must not vote for them again, or else that dark era will return," he added. Arvind Kejriwal said that with great difficulty, God has created a party like AAP, and stated, "This is nature's miracle, because neither he, nor Bhagwant Mann, nor Manish Sisodia, nor Satyendar Jain has money. They are small people, but by a miracle of nature, the party was formed and came to power in Punjab after Delhi so quickly. This is all being done by God and Waheguru." He said that even this new 20 lakh scheme will be opposed by these people. He told Congress, BJP, and Akali Dal leaders that if something good is happening, they should praise it. "This 20 lakh treatment will be available to everyone. They and their families will also be treated under this scheme. The AAP government has not discriminated, nor put any condition that Congress or Akali members will not be treated. Everyone will be treated. May God keep everyone happy," he continued. Arvind Kejriwal said that these people do not love Punjab or Punjabis, and highlighted, "They only want power so they can make money. Their cycle is money from power and power from money. Today, these parties are in a bad state. AAP is flourishing, while Congress leaders are busy stabbing each other in the back and everyone wants to become Chief Minister. The condition of the Akali Dal is also bad." Arvind Kejriwal concluded by asserting that only the AAP can shape the future of Punjab and the families of its people and take care of them, and said, "They want nothing for themselves. They are deeply thankful and grateful for the opportunity of service given by the people. They only ask that the public continues to give them love and trust." Meanwhile, CM Bhagwant Singh Mann said the scheme has been launched for the welfare of every section of society, inspired by the teachings of Guru Sahib. "Health cards will be issued to all 65 lakh families, covering nearly three crore citizens of Punjab," he said, adding that for the first time no income limit has been fixed for any health scheme in the state. "With the launch of this scheme today, Punjab has set a new benchmark for the entire country," the Chief Minister said, underlining that Punjab has now become the first state to provide free healthcare, free education, free electricity, and free bus travel for women.

STORES E-PROCUREMENT

E-Procurement Tender Notice No.: S/37/2025-26, Dtd: 20-01-2026. E-Tender are invited by the undersigned for the following works.

Sl.No.: 1; Tender No.: 40/25/0634/OT/209/2025-26
Closing/Opening Date: 09-02-2026

Brief Description : PTFE type Neutral Section Assembly (phase break) as per RDSO specification No: TI/SPC/OHE/SNS/0000 Rev-1 with A&C Slip No.1 [Warranty Period: 30 Months after the date of delivery] [Inspection Agency: TPI, Stage Insp.: No, Stages: 0] [UVAM Linking: Item :3100444, Short Neutral Section Assembly (Phase Break)] Item Type: Goods (supply) Safety Flag Change: Non-Safety to Safety. (i) Qty-3 Set for New Jalpaiguri/GSD,NFR (West Bengal), (ii) Qty-4 Set for Katihar GSD, NFR (Bihar), P.L. No- 46120178.

Sl.No.: 2; Tender No.: 30/25/1845E/OT/210/2025-26
Closing/Opening Date: 06-02-2026

Brief Description : Suspension Tube & Fittings without Bearing 10 items of DEMU WHEEL to CGL Drg. No. CGM/106001 Rev-2 or latest/BHEL Drg. No. 04461599015, Rev-00 or latest, (1) SUSPENSION TUBE: 01 No. to CGM/106801 Rev-8/BHEL Drg. No. 04461599011, (2) BEARING HOUSING : 01 No. to CGM/206803 Rev-0/BHEL Drg. No. 14461599032, (3) ADJUSTMENT WASHER: 01 No. to CGM/206805, Rev-1/BHEL Drg. No. 14461599033, (4) END COVER (RWE) 01 No. to CGM/206806 Rev-1, BHEL Drg. No. 14461599030, (5) END COVER -(GWE) 01 No. to CGM/206802 Rev-2, BHEL Drg.No.14461599031, (6) ABUTMENT PIECE : 01 No. to CGM/206804 Rev-0, BHEL Drg.No.14461599028, (7) ENCLOSURE 01 No. to CGM/206801 Rev-0, BHEL Drg.No.14461599029, (8) SOC. HD. CAP SCREW M10 X 30 : 06 Nos to CGM/42201 Rev-0, BHEL Drg.No.44391560001, (9) SOC. HD. CAP SCREW M12 X 70, 16 Nos to CGM/42202 (Item No.2) Rev-2, BHEL Drg.No. 44391560003 (Item-001), (10) GREASE NIPPLE : 02 Nos. to CGM/42203 Rev-1, BHEL Drg. No. 34394028003 [Warranty Period: 30 Months after the date of delivery] [Inspection Agency: TPI, Stage Insp.: No, Stages: 0] [UVAM Linking: Item Type: Goods (supply). Qty-80 Set for New Bongaigaon WORKSHOP DEPOT, NFR (Assam). P.L. No-31933919.

Sl.No.: 3; Tender No.: 61/25/5256A/OT/211/2025-26
Closing/Opening Date: 09-02-2026

Brief Description : Elastic Rail Clip MK-IV with flat toe for 60 kg UIC/52 kg rail sections to Drg. No. RDSO T-5919 with specification conforming to IRS-T-31-2021 with latest amendment, if any, with alt no. 2 with latest alterations, if any, [Warranty Period: 30 Months after the date of delivery] [Inspection Agency: RITES NON-TPI, Stage Insp.: No, Stages: 0] [UVAM Linking: Item :3100558, ELASTIC RAIL CLIPS] Item Type: Goods (supply). (i) Qty-3000000 Nos for Dy CMW/New Jalpaiguri, NFR (West Bengal), (ii) Qty-2000000 Nos for Dy CMM/Pandu, NFR (Assam). P.L.No-60110028.

Sl.No.: 4; Tender No.: 60/25/5300/OT/212/2025-26
Closing/Opening Date: 30-01-2026

Brief Description : (1) Supply, Installation, testing and commissioning of Automated Train Examination System (ATES) with staff hut on turnkey basis for New Guwahati Wagon Depot, Specification & scope of work: as per Annexure-A attached, [Warranty Period: 30 Month after the date of delivery] [Inspection Agency:TPI, Stage insp.: No, Stages:0] [UVAM Linking Item Type: Goods (supply). Qty-4 Nos for SSE/C&W/New Guwahati, NFR (Assam). P.L. No.- 661041760122, (2) CAMC for 5 years [Warranty Period: 30 Months after the date of delivery, AMC Period: 5 years, Rate of Discounting: 10% Start After year: 2] [Inspection Agency: CONSG, Stage Insp.: NA, Stage:0] [Item Type: AMC. Qty-4 Nos for SSE/C&W/New Guwahati, NFR (Assam). P.L. No.-66104176, (3) Supply, Installation, testing and commissioning of Automated Train Examination System with staff hut on a Turnkey basis at C&W Depot New Bongaigaon for Covering Train from Bongaigaon, Dangtal and Maligaon. [Warranty Period: 24 Months after the date of delivery] [Inspection Agency:TPI, Stage Insp.: No, Stage:0] [UVAM Linking]: Item Type: Goods (supply). Qty-3 Nos for SSE/C&W/New Bongaigaon, NFR (Assam). P.L. No.-787902400058. (4) CAMC for 5 years [Warranty Period : Months after the date of delivery, AMC Period: 5 years, Rate of Discounting: 10% Start After year:2] [Inspection Agency: CONSG, Stage Insp.: NA, Stage:0] [Item Type: AMC. Qty: 3 Nos for SSE/C&W/New Bongaigaon, NFR (Assam). P.L. No.-78790240. (5) Break up of individual item as per Schedule-IV and additional spares and items viz sling/lifting tackles as specified in schedule-1 [Warranty Period: 24 Months after the date of delivery] [Inspection Agency: TPI, Stage Insp.: No, Stages: 0] [UVAM Linking]: Item Type: Goods (essential spare). Qty-1 Nos for SSE/WTS/New Bongaigaon, NFR(Assam). P.L. No-6032202721. (4) Break up of individual item as per Schedule-IV and additional spares and items viz sling/lifting tackles as specified in schedule-1 [Warranty Period: 24 Months after the date of delivery] [Inspection Agency: TPI, Stage Insp.: No, Stages: 0] [UVAM Linking]: Item Type: Goods (essential spare). Qty-1 Nos for SSE/WTS/New Bongaigaon, NFR (Assam). P.L. No-6032202720.

Sl.No.: 5; Tender No.: 60/24/5104/OT/213/2025-26
Closing/Opening Date: 12-02-2026

Brief Description : (1) Supply, Installation & commissioning of EOT CRANE 5 TON along with DSL, spares as per schedule-IV and additional spares and items viz slings/lifting tackles as specified in schedule-1, maintenance tools as per schedule-V, any other accessory treated as concomitant accessory. [Warranty Period: 24 Months after the date of delivery] [Inspection Agency: TPI, Stage Insp.: No, Stages: 0] [UVAM Linking Item Type: Goods (supply). Qty-1 Nos for SSE/WTS/New Bongaigaon, NFR (Assam). P.L. No-60322030721. (2) Cost of Comprehensive AMC for five years after the warranty as per clause 17 of section-V [Warranty Period: Moths after the date of delivery, AMC Period : 5 years, Rate of Discounting : 10% Start After Year: 2] [Inspection Agency: CONSG, Stage Insp.: NA, Stages: 0] [Item Type: AMC. Qty-1 Nos for SSE/WTS/New Bongaigaon, NFR (Assam). P.L. No-6032202620. (3) Cost of Preventive maintenance during 1st & 2nd year of warranty period. [Inspection Agency: CONSG, Stage Insp.: NA, Stages: 0] [Item Type: Service (essential Service). Qty-1 Nos for SSE/WTS/New Bongaigaon, NFR(Assam). P.L. No-6032202720. (4) Break up of individual item as per Schedule-IV and additional spares and items viz sling/lifting tackles as specified in schedule-1 [Warranty Period: 24 Months after the date of delivery] [Inspection Agency: TPI, Stage Insp.: No, Stages: 0

Faridabad 'psycho killer' gets life term for woman's murder; linked to 5 more

Singh Raj, dubbed the "psycho killer," who was sentenced to life imprisonment for the kidnapping and murder of a 21-year-old woman in Faridabad, was found to have been involved in six other murders, including those of three minors and his own relatives.

A Faridabad court on Wednesday sentenced 54-year-old "psycho killer", Singh Raj, to life imprisonment for kidnapping and murdering a woman in 2022, in a case that came to light after the victim's family reported her missing to the police. According to police, Singh Raj is accused of committing a total of six murders in Faridabad, including those of three minors, his uncle and his cousin. While pronouncing the sentence, the court also imposed a fine of Rs 2.1 lakh on him in addition to the life sentence. The case for which Raj received the life term involved a 21-year-old woman from Bhupani village, whose aunt filed a missing person report in January 2022, prompting the police to register a case. The victim's remains were later recovered on January 6, and the accused was arrested the following day. During interrogation,

Raj confessed to killing the woman and dumping her body on the banks of the Agra Canal. He admitted that he had harassed the 21-year-old victim, and that she had blackmailed him because of it, following which he called her and strangled her to death. Analysis of phone data confirmed his connection to her last known contact. Despite the absence of eyewitness testimony, prosecutors were able to gather enough evidence to proceed with the charges. He also admitted to five other murders, including three minors, and a charge sheet in the case was filed on March 30, 2022, based on the initial complaint by the woman from Bhupani.

"During the trial, 29 witnesses testified... After hearing all parties, the

court of Additional Sessions Judge Purushottam Kumar held (Raj) guilty on Tuesday, and the court sentenced him to

statements, and other circumstantial findings to link Singh Raj to the killings. The court applied sections 302 and 364, covering both murder and abduction, in its judgment.

Raj worked as a security guard at a private hospital in Sector 16 in Faridabad and had come under police suspicion during another investigation.

Police said that in 2019, he molested and killed the daughter of a tea vendor. In August 2020, he killed a 12-year-old girl employed at a hospital, and in June 2021, he murdered another minor girl working as a cleaner there.

In addition to these crimes, Raj also confessed to murdering his uncle and cousin, although he had previously been acquitted in that case due to lack of evidence, police added.



Delhi parking fees to double during GRAP III and IV pollution alerts

New Delhi.(Agency)

In an attempt to curb air pollution in the national capital, the Delhi government has decided to increase parking fees. According to a new notification from the Environment Department, parking fees across the city will double whenever the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) reaches Phase III (severe) or Phase IV (very severe).

The move is part of the city's efforts to discourage vehicle use during days of high pollution. By increasing parking charges, authorities aim to reduce traffic congestion and limit vehicular emissions, which are major contributors to the city's worsening air quality, sources said. Notably, the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) on Tuesday announced that GRAP-4 restrictions have been withdrawn in Delhi-NCR after a slight improvement in air quality.

Authorities said the decision was taken as pollution levels showed a downward trend compared to the past few days. Despite the rollback, air pollution remains a major issue.

Delhi's AQI continued to be in the 'very poor' category on Wednesday. This marks a marginal improvement from the severe air quality levels that had engulfed the city till the day before Wednesday.

According to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), the city recorded a 24-hour average air quality index (AQI) of 330 at 4 pm. The air quality remained poor across most parts of the capital with 29 monitoring stations recording 'very poor' air quality and nine stations falling in the 'poor' category, as per CPCB's Sameer app. Among them, Nehru Nagar recorded the worst air quality in the evening with an AQI of 383.

As per Delhi's Decision Support System, the transport emerged as the largest contributor to air pollution in the city at 13.5%. Peripheral industries accounted for 10.8% of emissions, while Delhi-based burning contributed 1.2%. Construction activities added 1.7%.

Senior citizen placed under 'digital arrest' on pretext of Delhi blast probe, loses Rs 16.5 lakh

New Delhi.(Agency)

A 75-year-old retired civic official has allegedly been duped of Rs 16.5 lakh by cyber fraudsters who posed as ATS and NIA personnel and placed him under "digital arrest" for interrogation, claiming his name surfaced in the Delhi bomb blast case, police said. The victim, a resident of Andheri (East) in Mumbai, approached the West Region Cyber Police Station on Monday, an official said on Wednesday.

An explosive-laden vehicle detonated outside the historic Red Fort in Delhi on November 10 last year, killing over 12 persons.

According to the police, the victim, a retired official of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation, received a call on December 11 from unidentified persons claiming to be officers from the Delhi anti-terrorism department. The caller threatened him, saying his name had surfaced in the Delhi bomb blast case and that he needed to be interrogated secretly.

The caller then asked the victim to download the Signal application, where he received a video call. During the call, one of the fraudsters posed as National Investigation Agency (NIA) officer Sadanand Date. The caller told the victim that a bank account linked to his mobile number had allegedly received Rs 7 crore through money laundering activities and warned that he would be arrested in the case, the police said.

Citing the seriousness of the matter and its alleged connection to national security, the caller instructed the victim not to discuss the issue with anyone. The fraudsters claimed that the agency needed to verify whether his investments and deposits were from legal sources, and asked the victim to transfer his money to certain bank accounts for verification, a police official said.

Accordingly, the victim deposited Rs 16.5 lakh, following which the caller blocked his number. The victim later approached the cyber police and lodged a complaint, based on which a case has been registered against unidentified persons, the official said.

Digital arrest is a growing form of cybercrime in which fraudsters pose as law enforcement, court officials or personnel from government agencies to intimidate victims through audio and video calls. They hold the victims hostage and put pressure on them to pay money. In December last year, the Supreme Court asked the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to carry out a unified pan-India probe into cases of digital arrest fraud.

I-PAC Got Rs 13.5 Crore Loan From A Company That Doesn't Exist, Probe On

New Delhi.(Agency)

Political consultancy firm Indian Political Action Committee (I-PAC) has come under scrutiny following disclosures in its financial filings that it received an unsecured loan of Rs 13.5 crore in 2021 from a firm based in Haryana's Rohtak that, according to official public records, had ceased to exist years earlier. In its financial disclosures, I-PAC named the lender as Ramsetu Infrastructure India (P) Limited. However, an examination of records from the Registrar of Companies, a central government authority, shows that no such entity appears in the official database. Incorporation documents are available only for a similarly named company, Ramsetu Infrastructure India Private Limited.



According to corporate data aggregator Zauba Corp, Ramsetu Infrastructure India Private Limited was incorporated on December 18, 2013, as a non-government private company engaged in real estate

under Section 248(1) of the Companies Act, 2013, on August 18, 2018. The strike-off indicates that the Registrar took action after the company failed to commence business or ceased operations for two consecutive financial years and did not meet statutory compliance requirements.

Despite this, I-PAC's filings state that it received the loan in 2021, nearly three years after the company was dissolved. When contacted, the phone number listed online for Ram Setu Infrastructure India Private Limited, the individual who answered identified himself as Mukesh from Yamuna Nagar in Haryana and denied any association with the company. He also said he had no knowledge of why his number was listed as the firm's contact.

IAS Officer Who Emptied Stadium To Walk Dog Scores Big Delhi Role

New Delhi.(Agency)

IAS officer Sanjeev Khrirwar, the new Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) commissioner, had been shunted out of the national capital amid a massive controversy in 2022. Khrirwar drew fire in 2022 amid allegations that athletes at Delhi's Thyagaraj Stadium complex were asked to leave early so that the bureaucrat could "walk his dog".

Khrirwar is a 1994-batch IAS officer of the Arunachal Pradesh-Goa-Mizoram and Union Territories (AGMUT) cadre. His wife, Rinku Dugga, is also an IAS officer. On May 26, 2022, the Indian Express reported that

Khrirwar, then Delhi's Principal Secretary (Revenue), could walk his dog.

"We used to train till 8-8.30 pm under

lights earlier. But now, we are asked to



activities, with an authorised share capital of Rs 5 lakh. The company had two directors - Vijendar and Vikram - both appointed on October 18, 2013. Official records further show that the company was struck off

Khrirwar had then said the allegation was "absolutely incorrect".

He accepted that he "sometimes" took his pet for a walk at the facility but denied that it disrupted the athletes' practice. In the wake of the controversy, Delhi's then Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had directed all state-run sports facilities in the city to stay open for sports persons till 10 pm.

Following the row, the Union Home Ministry transferred Khrirwar to Ladakh. He has now been brought back, and Ashwani Kumar, the previous MCD commissioner, transferred to Jammu and Kashmir. The bureaucrat takes charge right before the MCD prepares to present its budget and faces several administrative and financial challenges.

Magh Mela-Swami

Avimuktеш्वरानन्द clash reignites Jyotirmath Shankaracharya row

New Delhi.(Agency)

Amid the ongoing Magh Mela in Prayagraj, tensions have flared between disciples of Swami Avimukteshwarananda and the fair administration, escalating into a political controversy. The administration has sent a notice to Swami Avimukteshwarananda, questioning on what basis he claimed the title of Shankaracharya.

This move was based on a Supreme Court order that had halted the appointment and consecration of Shankaracharyas.

Swami Avimukteshwarananda has been recognised as the Shankaracharya of Jyotirmath since 2022, but his appointment has been mired in controversy from the start. The recent clash during Mauni Amavasya in Prayagraj has revived a debate that traces its roots back over 80 years.

ORIGINS OF CONTROVERSY

The Shankaracharya seat at Jyotirmath remained vacant for nearly 168 years after the death of Swami Ramakrishna Tirtha in the 18th century. During this period, multiple sadhus and gurus laid claim to the title, leading to a series of civil disputes in the early 20th century. In 1941, the Shankaracharyas of three other Peeths persuaded Swami Brahmananda Saraswati to accept the position. His appointment, supported by the Puri and Sringeri Shankaracharyas as well as regional rulers, marked a unanimous recognition of his leadership.

Swami Brahmananda Saraswati died on May 20, 1953, sparking a succession dispute that persists even today.

THE SUCCESSION DISPUTE

After Brahmananda Saraswati's death, his disciple Swami Hariharanand Saraswati refused the position. A registered will allegedly named Swami Shantanand Saraswati as the successor, followed by Swami Dwarkeswarananda Saraswati, Swami Vishnudevananda Saraswati, and Swami Paramananda Saraswati. Swami Shantanand assumed the position, but many disciples and other Shankaracharyas questioned the legitimacy of a succession by will, citing Adi Shankaracharya's "Mathamaya Mahanushasanam," which did not allow appointment by testament. Over the following decades, disputes continued.

Swami Krishnabodh Ashramji Maharaj was nominated as Shankaracharya and died in 1973, naming Swami Swaroopanand Saraswati as his successor. In 1989, Swaroopanand Saraswati declared himself successor after the death of a senior saint, while Swantanandji recognised Vasudevanand Saraswati, resulting in two Shankaracharyas from the same Peeth. The Allahabad High Court in 2017 refused to recognise either Swaroopanand Saraswati or Vasudevanand Saraswati as legitimate Shankaracharyas.

Saraswati Puja, Friday Namaz can both take place tomorrow at disputed Bhojshala: Supreme Court

New Delhi.(Agency)

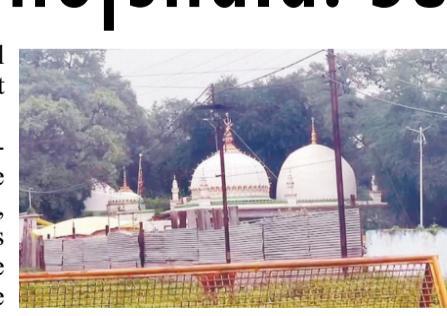
The Supreme Court on Thursday ruled that both Hindu and Muslim devotees may offer prayers at the disputed Bhojshala complex in Madhya Pradesh's Dhar on Friday, January 23, as the Saraswati Puja festival coincides with customary Friday prayers. The Court took into consideration a proposal under which Juma prayers would be conducted between 1 pm and 3 pm in a designated area inside the mosque, with the crowd dispersing immediately after the namaz. Similar arrangements would be made to facilitate Saraswati Puja at the site.

A fair suggestion was given that in the afternoon for namaz within 1 and 3 pm and exclusive and separate area within the same compound including separate ingress and egress within the same compound shall be made available so that Namaz can be performed. Similarly a separate space shall be made available to

the Hindu community to hold traditional ceremonies on the occasion of Basant Panchami," the court said.

The Bhojshala complex, an 11th-century monument protected by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), has long been the subject of a religious dispute. Hindus consider it a temple dedicated to Goddess Saraswati, while Muslims claim it as the Kamal Maula Mosque. The Bhoj Utsav Committee had sought permission from authorities to perform Saraswati Puja throughout the day on January 23, while the Muslim community submitted a memorandum seeking approval to offer Friday prayers from 1 pm to 3 pm, citing the significance of the day.

Under an arrangement in place for the past 23 years, the ASI allows Hindus to worship at Bhojshala on Tuesdays, while Muslims are permitted to offer prayers on Fridays.



A similar situation had arisen in 2016, when Basant Panchami fell on a Friday, leading to protests and clashes in Dhar over prayer timings at the disputed site.

SENDS MAIN CASE TO HIGH COURT

The Supreme Court also referred the original dispute concerning the Dhar Bhojshala to the Madhya Pradesh High Court, directing its division bench to take up the matter expeditiously. Disposing of the petition before it, the top court asked the High Court to hear the original dispute within two weeks. It also directed

that the sealed report submitted by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) be opened in open court.

"We request the High Court to open the ASI's sealed report in open court," the Supreme Court said, while further directing that copies of the report be furnished to both parties. The parties will be allowed to file their objections to the ASI report within two weeks thereafter. It also ordered that the status quo with respect to the disputed site be maintained until the High Court takes up and hears the matter. The dispute over the Bhojshala has intensified recently due to a court-ordered scientific survey. In March 2024, the Madhya Pradesh High Court ordered a scientific survey to determine the site's original character. The ASI submitted a report in July 2024, reportedly finding evidence of pre-existing temple structures, including Sanskrit inscriptions and defaced Hindu deities.

NEWS BOX

Rinku Singh underused by India, should have played 100 T20Is by now: Simon Doull

New Delhi. (Agency)

Former pacer Simon Doull said Rinku Singh's T20I opportunities for India have been far too limited, despite his proven match-winning ability. Rinku showcased his finishing brilliance on Wednesday, January 21, scoring an unbeaten 44 off 20 balls, including four fours and three sixes, to help India post 238 for seven and secure a 48-run win over New Zealand in the series opener at Nagpur. Since making his T20I debut in 2023, Rinku has played just 36 matches. He missed out on India's T20 World Cup 2024 squad but earned a spot in the 2026 edition. Doull believes Rinku should have featured in far more T20Is by now, highlighting his exceptional power and composure at the death. He described Rinku as one of the best finishers in the game, whose talent India have clearly underutilised. "Rinku Singh is one of the best finishers in the game. We saw him burst onto the scene in the IPL four or five years ago, and I still feel he hasn't played enough T20 cricket for India since then. He should have featured far more and could



easily have played 100 games by now," Doull told Star Sports. "Rinku needs to be backed in that finishing role because he is exceptional at it. Despite his height, he is incredibly powerful, and his ability to get under the ball at the death makes him extremely difficult to bowl to," Doull added.

INDIA DOMINATE KIWIS

India began their five-match T20I series against New Zealand with a commanding 48-run victory. After New Zealand won the toss and elected to bowl, India delivered a spectacular batting performance, posting 238 for seven in 20 overs—one of their highest T20 totals against the Kiwis. Opener Abhishek Sharma was the star, smashing 84 off just 35 balls with eight sixes, setting the tone for India's aggressive innings. He received strong support from Suryakumar Yadav (32), Hardik Pandya (25), and a blistering knock from Rinku Singh, helping India finish on a high.

Gautam Gambhir reacts to Tharoor's PM Modi post, says pitted against his own team

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

India head coach Gautam Gambhir created a stir on social media on Thursday, January 22, with his latest tweet. After India's first T20I win against New Zealand in Nagpur, Gambhir reacted to a tweet praising him, but his response hinted that he does not enjoy complete authority over the Indian team, setting off widespread discussion online. The tweet he responded to was posted by Congress MP Shashi Tharoor, who had earlier shared that he met his old friend Gautam Gambhir in Nagpur and held



a frank conversation with the India head coach about the team. Tharoor spoke warmly of Gambhir, describing his role as the second-toughest job in India, behind only that of the Prime Minister, praise that inadvertently led to Gambhir's controversial reply. In Nagpur, enjoyed a good & frank discussion with my old friend Gautam Gambhir, the man with the hardest job in India after the PM's! He is being second-guessed by millions daily but stays calm and walks on undaunted. A word of appreciation for his quiet determination and able leadership. Wishing him all success," Tharoor wrote a day ahead of the opening T20I of the series. Gambhir reacted to the tweet late on Thursday night and hit back at critics who have called him out over the Indian team's transition phase. Gambhir said that, contrary to popular belief, he does not have "unlimited authority" over the Indian team and that clarity would emerge once the dust settles. He kept his remark ambiguous, without making anything explicit. "When the dust settles, truth and logic about a coach's supposedly 'unlimited authority' will become clear. Till then I'm amused at being pitted against my own who are the very best!" Gambhir wrote on Twitter.

IND vs NZ, 1st T20I: India showcased fearless, aggressive batting to pile up 238 against New Zealand in the T20I series opener in Nagpur. With Shubman Gill out of the side, India returned to their belligerent best, each batter playing without fear of failure, while Rinku Singh provided the cushion in the lower middle order.

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

Gonna be a cracker of a series," tweeted Rajasthan Royals batter Riyan Parag when his former captain Sanju Samson walked out to bat against New Zealand in the first T20I of the five-match series. The mood at the VCA Stadium in Nagpur matched the tweet. Spectators settled into their seats earlier than usual. Nobody wanted to miss a ball when Samson and Abhishek Sharma were at the crease, and nobody did. The beginning of the innings lived up to the anticipation. After seeing off a few deliveries, Abhishek Sharma

launched Jacob Duffy straight down the ground for six. Samson, fully aware that the partnership demanded immediate intent, followed it up by pulling Kyle Jamieson for two boundaries in the second over. Samson's stay, however, was brief. Still in the second over, Jamieson dismissed him with a well-disguised slower ball that Samson chipped to short midwicket. The crowd barely had time to process the dismissal before Ishan Kishan walked out. Away from the team for over two years, Kishan showed no interest in easing himself back in. Instead of taking time to settle, he struck two of his first three balls for four. That burst did not last long either. Misjudging the pace of the ball in the third over, Kishan chipped a catch to cover. India were two down inside three overs.

Six months ago, this would have triggered a familiar response. An anchor would dig in. The innings would slow. Damage control would take over.

But this is not India. Not any more. And certainly not the India that opens with Abhishek Sharma and Shubman Gill.

THE GILL PROBLEM INDIA HAD

launched Jacob Duffy straight down the ground for six. Samson, fully aware that the partnership demanded immediate intent, followed it up by pulling Kyle Jamieson for two boundaries in the second over. Samson's stay, however, was brief. Still in the second over, Jamieson dismissed him with a well-disguised slower ball that Samson chipped to short midwicket. The crowd barely had time to process the dismissal before Ishan Kishan walked out. Away from the team for over two years, Kishan showed no interest in easing himself back in. Instead of taking time to settle, he struck two of his first three balls for four. That burst did not last long either. Misjudging the pace of the ball in the third over, Kishan chipped a catch to cover. India were two down inside three overs.

India had split an opening pair featuring two batters striking at 190 and 180. Gill played 15 T20Is since the start of the Asia Cup and managed 291 runs at an average of 24.25 and a strike rate of 137.26. Gill is undoubtedly one of the finest young batters going around, but asking him to do something that does not naturally come to him was a failure of the team management and the selectors. What it also did was eat into a finisher's role, as India were forced to play their wicketkeeper in the

middle order. Fortunately, the decision-makers were brave enough to abort the plan just before the T20 World Cup and restore Samson and Abhishek at the top.

With that, Rinku Singh, one of the finest finishers in the game, also got his chance in the lower middle order. Rinku provides the assurance to top-order batters that they can go for the kill without worrying about the length of the batting line-up.

ABHISHEK LEADS THE CARNAGE

And it was evident in the way each and every batter played on Wednesday in Nagpur.

India captain Suryakumar Yadav walked in, danced down a couple of steps to Jacob Duffy, and caressed the ball through the covers for four. It was not just a boundary. It was a statement of intent.

That freedom allowed Abhishek Sharma to fully unleash himself. He rained hell on the New Zealand bowlers, dealing almost exclusively in sixes and racing to 84 off just 35 balls. Around him, the tempo never dipped. Suryakumar chipped in with 32 at a strike rate of 145. Hardik Pandya followed with 25 at 156. Later, Rinku Singh walked in and finished with 44 not out at a strike rate of 220.

IND vs NZ: Arshdeep Singh unfazed by Playing XI pressure, enjoying one game at a time

CHRISTCHURCH. (Agency)

India's preparations for the upcoming T20 World Cup began on a commanding note in Nagpur, and amid the dominant series-opening win over New Zealand, Arshdeep Singh made it clear that selection pressure is the last thing on his mind. The left-arm pacer stressed that his focus remains firmly on enjoying the game and delivering whenever the team management calls upon him. Speaking after India's 48-run victory in the first T20I, Arshdeep underlined that he does not concern himself with uncertainties surrounding the Playing XI. Addressing the media at the post-match press conference, the 26-year-old said his approach has been to stay prepared at all times and control only what lies within his reach. "I try to be ready all the time. Whenever the team gives me a chance, I try to be ready and give my best. Few things are not in my hands, and I try to enjoy every game," Arshdeep said, summing up his mindset amid frequent selection



Decoding RCB's bold moves: Turning weakness into winning weapons in WPL 2026

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

When Royal Challengers Bengaluru walked onto the field against Mumbai Indians in their WPL 2026 opener, the cracks in their batting lineup were impossible to ignore. Nadine de Klerk's late heroics salvaged the innings, but the absence of Elyse Perry, arguably RCB's most accomplished batter, had left a glaring void. Radha Yadav, with a modest top score of 27 in the WPL, came in at No. 5, and the middle-to-lower order looked perilously fragile. The signs were clear: this batting line-up could be exposed at any moment. Fast-forward through a series of high-pressure games, and RCB have done something remarkable—they've transformed vulnerability into strength. The batting, once a glaring worry, now fires in perfect rhythm with a lethal bowling attack. Young talents have risen in crunch moments, unexpected contributions have shifted momentum, and the team has gelled into a balanced, fearless unit. Sitting atop the points table, RCB now epitomises resilience, firepower, and composure—a squad that turned early doubts into dominance, making them one of the most formidable sides in WPL 2026.

GAUTAMI BOLSTERS RCB

After their first game, RCB knew they had a glaring weakness in their batting. The solution was bold—and it paid off spectacularly. The team handed young Gautami Naik her maiden WPL cap, a move



and solidifying her place in a lineup that had looked fragile just days before. The story is also one of connections and preparation. Gautami had previously shared the field with RCB skipper Smriti Mandhana while representing Ratnagiri Jets in the Maharashtra Premier League—a mentorship and familiarity that may have given her the confidence to shine on such a big stage. With this fearless display, Gautami didn't just fill a gap; she transformed it into one of RCB's most potent weapons.

RADHA ADDS MORE POWER

If RCB's batting resurgence needed a defining moment, Radha Yadav delivered it in emphatic and unexpected fashion. Primarily known for her crafty left-arm spin, Radha had rarely been seen as a batter capable of shaping an innings. Big scores and rescue acts were not part of the script—until now. Walking in with RCB struggling at 43 for four against the Giants in Navi Mumbai, the pressure was firmly on Radha Ghosh and Nadine de Klerk to steady the ship. Radha, at best, was expected to support. Instead, she seized control. With calm intent and growing confidence, she began rotating strike, punishing loose balls, and slowly wresting momentum away from the opposition.

Babar Azam's stint at Big Bash League: Selling the dream, delivering the dots

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

India head coach Gautam Gambhir created a stir on social media on Thursday, January 22, with his latest tweet. After India's first T20I win against New Zealand in Nagpur, Gambhir reacted to a tweet praising him, but his response hinted that he does not enjoy complete authority over the Indian team, setting off widespread discussion online. The tweet he responded to was posted by Congress MP Shashi Tharoor, who had earlier shared that he met his old friend Gautam Gambhir in Nagpur and held



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FDI flows to India surged by 73% in 2025: UNCTAD

New Delhi.(Agency)

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in India surged by 73 per cent last year, bringing in USD 47 billion, according to UNCTAD.

The increase was "mainly due to large investments in services -- including finance, IT (information technology), and R&D (Research and Development) -- as well as manufacturing, supported by policies aimed at integrating India into global supply chains", the UN trade agency said in a report released on Tuesday. Investments in data centres in India totalled USD 7 billion during the first three quarters of last year, according to the latest issue of the Global Investment Trends Monitor. That put India in seventh place among the countries receiving investments for data centres during that period.

However, in the fourth quarter, FDI in the sector jumped significantly, making the sector ever more dynamic. Google announced in October that it was investing USD 15 billion in an AI hub in Andhra Pradesh. In December, Microsoft announced USD 17.5 billion investments in AI and cloud infrastructure, and data centres. And also in December, Amazon said it would invest USD 35 billion in AI and other sectors. These investments are likely to be spread over a few years. Globally, the report said FDI increased last year by 14 per cent to USD 1.6 trillion. "Industry trends in 2025 show that data centres now shape the FDI landscape; they accounted for one-fifth of global greenfield project values," the report said. With demand driven by AI infrastructure and proprietary digital networks, announced investments in the area exceeded USD 270 billion, according to the report.

Semiconductors was another area showing high growth, with the value of newly announced projects increasing by 35 per cent, it said.

In areas that were exposed to tariff risks, project numbers fell sharply by 25 per cent, according to UNCTAD.

A New Age Of War Is Here: Why India's Next Budget Faces Its Biggest Security Test

New Delhi.(Agency)

The government is preparing the next Union Budget at a time of serious global tension. The world is facing instability, uncertainty and growing military threats, not seen since the Second World War. In this situation, national security planning is no longer limited to protecting borders only.

For a rising power like India, security now extends across land, sea, air, cyberspace and outer space. The country's challenges go well beyond traditional borders. Complicated relations with neighbouring countries and long coastlines have increased India's defence needs. Rapid changes in the nature of warfare and the rise of high-technology weapons have made security threats multi-layered. Simple procurement of weapons or short-term upgrades no longer offer solutions. Armed forces now require full-spectrum modernisation and readiness for future forms of warfare. Recent conflicts have highlighted this change. Operation Sindoos, the United States strikes on Iran, the Russia-Ukraine war and the Israel-Hamas conflict have shown that decisive battles increasingly take place in the air and across advanced technological domains. China's rapid build-up of military infrastructure along border areas, deployment of advanced weapons and investments in cyber and space warfare have added pressure. Pakistan-backed terrorism and proxy conflict now include drones, UAVs and cyber attacks. These trends have raised the level of complexity. In the maritime domain, China is growing naval presence in the Indian Ocean, investments in strategic ports and efforts to dominate sea lanes pose serious challenges to India's maritime security.

Capex allocation seen to grow at 8-10% to Rs 12 lakh cr

New Delhi.(Agency)

Analysts don't expect a significant jump in allocation to capital expenditure (capex) in this year's budget as they are of the view that the government must first try and fix the gaps in spending for better impact on the economy. In fact, analysts feel the government must focus more on encouraging private investment. Many analysts TNIE spoke to put the capex allocation in the 11.6-12 lakh crore range for FY27 while estimating a lower than budgeted capex in the current financial year. The growth in capex has been pegged at 8-10% in FY27. This would include the target-based capex loan provided to the states.

Even within the government, there is a feeling that there should be some stock-taking of the quality of capex. "The last Budget signalled a pause to review and reassess priorities rather than continue spending mechanically. The focus is now shifting from simply raising the capital share of the Budget to identifying gaps in public goods and infrastructure and directing spending more strategically to address those gaps," said a senior government official on the condition of anonymity. The government had last year budgeted for Rs 11.21 lakh crore capex allocation in the FY26. However, analysts feel the government might spend not more than Rs 11 lakh crore in the current financial year. In the April-November 2025 period, the government has spent Rs 6.6 lakh crore. Dharmakirti Joshi, chief economist at Crisil Limited, says the central government's capital expenditure can be budgeted to grow in line with the rate of nominal GDP and should be complemented by measures to encourage private investment. The nominal GDP has been pegged to grow at 10%. According to Radhika Rao, chief economist at DBS Bank, the Centre's capex budget in FY27 would stay around 3.0-3.1% of GDP, up 7-8% yoy from FY26, with an emphasis on identifying shovel-ready and greenfield projects.

Gold and silver keep soaring to record highs, but is it a boom or a bubble

In 2025, gold delivered its strongest annual gains in nearly 50 years, while silver posted its best returns ever. That strength carried into 2026, with silver crossing the Rs 3,00,000 per kg mark in India.

New Delhi.(Agency)

Gold and silver have seen an unprecedented rise over the past year, but the rally briefly paused after recent comments by the US President eased geopolitical tensions. US President Donald Trump ruled out the use of force to take control of Greenland and dropped plans to impose fresh tariffs on European allies. These comments eased fears of a wider trade conflict, which had been weighing on global

equities. Precious metals slipped after safe-haven demand weakened, and the dollar strengthened, showing how sensitive bullion prices remain to global headlines. In India, gold fell to Rs 150,870 per 10 grams, down Rs 2,940 or 1.91%, while silver dropped to Rs 310,770 per kg, losing Rs 6,460 or 2.04%. The fall came after gold had climbed to record highs globally, reminding investors that even strong rallies can see sudden reversals.

A ONCE-IN-A-GENERATION RUN FOR PRECIOUS METALS

Despite the recent fall, the bigger picture for precious metals remains striking. In 2025, gold delivered its strongest annual gains in nearly 50 years, while silver posted its best returns ever. That strength carried into 2026, with silver crossing the Rs 3,00,000 per kg mark in India, a level few investors would have imagined just a few years ago. At a time when equity markets struggled to deliver meaningful returns, the surge in

gold and silver has felt surreal for investors, pushing many to question whether commodities are replacing stocks as the preferred asset class.

IS THIS A PERMANENT SHIFT AWAY FROM EQUITIES



Market experts caution against reading the rally as a long-term change in market structure. Trivesh D, COO of Tradejini, says the outperformance of gold and silver reflects the stage of the market cycle rather than a permanent move away from

equities. "From a market cycle perspective, the recent outperformance of gold and silver reflects a classic late-cycle or risk-off phase rather than any permanent shift away from equities. Commodities tend to find momentum in periods of high uncertainty, slower growth expectations, and tighter financial conditions," he says.

He adds, "While commodities can outperform for phases, history indicates that this is more tactical than structural. Equities remain the primary long-term creators of wealth once growth visibility improves."

WHY GOLD AND SILVER RALLIED SO SHARPLY

According to Trivesh D, the rally has been driven by several global factors working together. "The rally in gold and silver over the past year has been a mix of global uncertainty, geopolitical risks, expectations of lower interest rates, sustained central bank buying, and concerns around currency stability," he says.

Climbdown in Greenland tensions to boost market sentiments, help rupee recover

New Delhi.(Agency)

The overnight signs of a climbdown in Greenland-related tensions will provide relief to market sentiments and rupee volatility is likely to persist in the near term but depreciation is expected to be more gradual than the recent sharp moves, a report showed on Thursday.

The rupee rebounded from its all-time low levels to gain 15 paise at 91.50 against the US dollar in early trade on Thursday. According to Radhika Rao, Executive Director and Senior Economist at DBS Bank, the bearish handover from last year



was further fuelled by a confluence of global as well as domestic cues. A sharp rise in the global VIX reflected weakness across market indicators, not helped by unfavourable geopolitical developments and jump in global bond yields. In this context, overnight signs of a climbdown in Greenland-related tensions will provide relief to market sentiments," she noted.

A momentous trade deal with the European Union is within reach (likely to be finalised next week), and some optimism has resurfaced over the US-trade trade negotiations after constructive remarks out of the World Economic Forum (WEF) meeting Davos. Domestically, the downward pressure on the rupee comes at a time of apparent strength in economic growth, with the 1Q-2QFY average at 8 per cent (on-year) and our forecast at above 7.5 per cent for FY26".

A weak currency does cushion rupee earnings for exporters affected by higher tariffs but has caused distortions elsewhere. "The annual CAD will still look manageable at close to -1.0-1.2 per cent of GDP, but capital flows have been the bigger bother. After net outflows in 2025, equity markets have witnessed USD 3 billion outflows this year, while bonds attracted tepid interest," said the DBS Bank report. Net FDI is faring better than last year but is still at a gap compared to gross FDI due to repatriation pressures. "The fiscal impulse will be more apparent at the upcoming Budget, as cumulative general government borrowings are expected to rise in FY27," it mentioned.

Sensex, Nifty rebound as global cues improve: Is the worst finally over

New Delhi.(Agency)

Domestic stock markets finally took a breather on Thursday. After weeks of steady bleeding, the S&P BSE Sensex jumped 789.57 points to 82,699.20 and the NSE Nifty50 rose 252.95 points to 25,410.45. Traders who walked in expecting another dull day got a pleasant surprise instead. The spark came from overseas. US President Donald



Trump suddenly softened his stance on two of his loudest threats. He backed off talk of taking Greenland by force. He also stepped away from fresh tariffs on Europe. With the fear factor cooling, buying returned across sectors. Analysts said the market was oversold and just waiting for a reason to bounce. This was enough.

Dr V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Investments Limited, did not hold back. "In yet another classic TACO, Trump has

withdrawn from his threat to annex Greenland by force," he said. "More importantly, the message that the US would refrain from imposing tariffs on Europe takes away the threat of a US Europe trade war which was dragging the markets down. The relief rally can be significant since there are about 2 lakh short contracts in the market and the setup is right for short covering."

Brokerage notes echoed the sentiment.

Several pointed out that last week's fall had pushed valuations to levels where

bargain hunting usually begins. Some even flagged that foreign investor selling has slowed, a small but encouraging shift for a market that had been struggling to hold support.

Back home, the earnings picture is a mixed bag. Q3 numbers have been dented by higher provisions linked to the new labour code. Analysts expect this to be a one-time hit. Not everything

is gloomy though. Eternal delivered better-than-expected revenue and profit growth from its quick commerce business, giving Dalal Street a rare domestic boost. So is the worst finally over? Too early to declare victory. But today's rebound shows the market was skidding more out of fear than fundamentals. If global cues stay calm and earnings don't spring nasty surprises, this could well be the start of steadier days on Dalal Street.

AI-Powered pricing is raising prices by up to 15%—Here's how it affects you

Kolkata.(Agency)

Artificial intelligence is no longer limited to chatbots or self-driving cars — it's now playing a major role in how companies set prices for everyday goods and services. Rather than fixed pricing, many businesses are turning to AI-powered pricing algorithms that adjust prices in real time based on customer behaviour, demand, location, and even device type. While firms market this as "smart pricing," consumer advocates warn it may be contributing to higher costs, reduced transparency, and new forms of digital price discrimination. Dynamic pricing — where prices vary according to market conditions — isn't a new idea. Airlines have used automated systems for decades to change fares based on demand. What's changed is the scale and precision of today's AI systems. Modern algorithms can instantly analyse thousands of data points to forecast what a particular



customer is most likely to pay. These tools are now widely used across e-commerce, food delivery apps, hotel booking platforms, ride-hailing services, and online retail. According to a McKinsey study, companies using AI-based pricing systems can see revenue increases of up to 15 percent, even though these gains do not

necessarily translate into lower costs for consumers or workers.

The Rise of "Personalised" Prices

One of the most controversial outcomes of algorithmic pricing is personalised pricing — where different customers may see different prices for the exact same product based on data such as browsing device or inferred spending power. Critics argue this creates a form of digital price discrimination, with wealthier users potentially charged

more simply because algorithms predict they can afford it. Consumer advocacy groups have raised alarms about this trend, urging greater oversight and fairness in pricing mechanisms.

Tariffs or no tariffs, here's why global CEOs are betting big on India

India's rise in CEO rankings reflects a simple reality. Global companies want growth, scale and stability, and the numbers show India is delivering more of it than most major markets right now.

New Delhi.(Agency)

Global CEOs are looking at a world that feels more fragile than it did even a year ago. Growth is uneven, new risks are emerging and confidence has slipped. Yet the latest PwC Global CEO Survey shows one trend that cuts through the gloom. More global leaders are shifting their investment plans toward India. The survey, based on responses from 4,454 CEOs across 95 countries, finds that 13% of global CEOs planning international

investments now place India among their top three destinations. Last year that figure was 7%. The jump pushes India alongside Germany and the UK and leaves only the United States ahead as a preferred global investment market.

WHY INDIA IS AN IMPORTANT MARKET

The global backdrop makes this rise more striking. CEO confidence in short-term revenue growth has fallen to 30%, down from 38% last year. Threat perceptions are higher too. 31% of CEOs say they are highly or extremely exposed to cyber risks. 29% expect tariffs to squeeze profit margins. Another 32% admit geopolitical tensions are making them hold back large investments. India, however, is moving in a different direction. The survey shows that 42% of CEOs have pushed their companies into new sectors over the last five years as traditional revenue streams slow. The companies doing this successfully are reporting better margins and stronger confidence. India fits this shift naturally. It is one of the few major markets where consumer demand, digital adoption, manufacturing depth and



technology capability are expanding at the same time. For CEOs looking for growth beyond slowing Western markets, India offers a combination that is becoming increasingly hard to ignore. This confidence is visible in public statements. JPMorgan CEO Jamie Dimon has described India as a natural partner in a rebalancing global economy. Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella announced a \$17.5 billion investment commitment focused on AI and cloud capacity and called India central to the company's future strategy. Large retailers like LuLu Group are expanding operations in multiple Indian states because they see long-term demand and policy stability. A MARKET

NO GLOBAL COMPANY CAN IGNORE

Scale is a major part of the story. Several global research houses project that India is on track to become the world's third-largest consumer product market by 2026, behind only the United States and China.

Household consumption has almost doubled over the past decade to about \$2.4 trillion as incomes rise and urbanisation accelerates. A Bain & Company analysis found that many multinational consumer firms with Indian operations are growing faster in India than in their global portfolios, and several report that India now contributes meaningfully to shareholder returns. For global CEOs, the message is clear. Any company that is not meaningfully present in India risks missing one of the world's biggest consumer growth opportunities.

PRACTICAL BASE FOR TECH, AI DEPLOYMENT

Technology ambitions are also shaping CEO interest. Many global companies are under pressure to show results from AI investments, yet their in-house pilot projects have produced mixed outcomes.

Rubina Dilaik

Thinks Jannat Zubair Is Looking 'Pretty' In Blue Salwar Suit

Jannat Zubair recently shared a series of stunning photos that left fans in awe. The young actress and digital creator looked every bit like Disney's Princess Jasmine in a dazzling aqua blue salwar suit. The outfit featured a minimal lace border along the neck and body, adding a subtle yet elegant touch to her traditional look. Her styling perfectly complemented her graceful and regal aura. Jannat accessorised with matching bangles, antique jhumkas, a statement silver ring, and traditional jutti, enhancing the ethnic charm. She kept her hair casual and opted for minimal makeup, letting her natural beauty shine through. Her poses and flawless styling made the pictures truly eye-catching, quickly turning the post into a favourite among fans. Rubina Dilaik wasted no time before commenting, "Prettyyy" to her.



showcased strong on-screen chemistry between the two. Fans were quick to speculate about whether the pair were dating, with comments like, "This love looks real because their bond feels genuine," and "They look like they are truly in love, that's why it feels so natural." The song, sung by Rito Riba, quickly crossed 1.5 million views and became a trending topic on social media. Despite the growing curiosity, neither Jannat nor Elvish has confirmed any real-life relationship, leaving fans to enjoy their performances and style moments.

Tanya Mittal

'Loves' Neelam Giri, Hints At Friendship Revival

Bigg Boss 19 may have ended over a month ago, but the contestants are still making headlines. Tanya Mittal and Neelam Giri, once close friends inside the house, had a public fallout after the show. The tension began when Tanya unfollowed Neelam on social media, hurt by statements Neelam made about her during the



show. Recently, Tanya praised Neelam in an interview with Filmy Window, hinting that their friendship may have been restored. She said, "Honestly, woh ladki itni pyaari hai. Mujhe lagta hai uske mummy-papa ne kuch bohot ache karm kiye honge ki unhein itni achi beti hui. From the very first day, the house was against me. Even on weekends, I was constantly

roasted. But whenever I cried, Neelam was always there for me. She would console me and say, 'You don't know who you are.'"

Neelam Shares Her Side of the Story

Neelam also addressed the issue in an interview with Paras Chhabra. She said that after Tanya's eviction, they met at the finale and spoke properly.

"Inside the house, we had made so many plans about meeting and hanging out later, but once outside, things changed. I didn't even have her number, so I was wondering how to get in touch. When I found out Tanya had unfollowed me, I felt really hurt and unfollowed her back," Neelam explained.

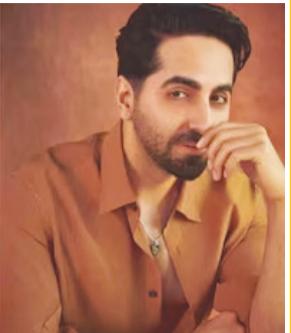
Tanya Opens Up About Farhana Bhatt

Apart from Neelam, Tanya also reflected on her strained bond with fellow contestant Farhana Bhatt. She described Farhana as a "negative character" and rejected claims that she befriended Farhana to improve her own image. Tanya said, "Farhana never questioned my status, but she always questioned me as a person. She kept saying I became friends with her to look good. That really hurt me. How would I look good by being friends with a negative character?"

Tanya Responds to Amaal Mallik Allegations
Tanya also addressed allegations from singer Amaal Mallik, who claimed she was running a paid PR campaign against him. Tanya denied the claims, saying, "If I wanted to be associated with Amaal, I would have shared my number and spoken to him. I haven't messaged, called, or tried to meet him. There is no truth in his claims." Even after Bigg Boss 19 wrapped up, friendships, feuds, and controversies among contestants.



Ayushmann Khurrana And Sara Ali Khan's Action Comedy, Backed by Dharma, In Trouble? Karan Johar Reacts



Yesterday, on January 20, reports came in that Ayushmann Khurrana and Sara Ali Khan's action comedy, backed by Karan Johar's Dharma Productions, had landed in some trouble. The report also claimed that the film had been pushed, and that deciding whether it should be released in theatres or on OTT was another roadblock. However, a fresh update on the project states that nothing like that has happened and everything is on track. As per HT City, Karan Johar himself confirmed that there are no roadblocks and everything is going as planned. The portal quoted Johar saying, "This is not true. We have 10 days of shoot left, and we are very much releasing the film theatrically this year." The portal also shared that not only Karan, but the director of the film, Aakash Kaushik, has also confirmed that the film is on track.

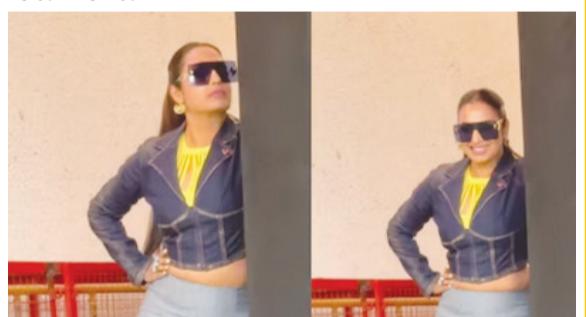
Ayushmann Khurrana and Sara Ali Khan In Pati Patni Aur Woh Do

Apart from the action comedy, Ayushmann and Sara will also be sharing screen space in Pati Patni Aur Woh Do. Earlier, the makers of the film dropped the first poster, introducing Ayushmann as Prajapati Pandey and teasing a world filled with love, laughter, and inevitable marital confusion. The official caption read, "Hai pati ki hoti hai, apni ek afatoon duniya... Jo unko bhale hi satati ho, magar hum sabki badha hasati hai! Introducing the world of #PrajapatiPandey starring #AyushmannKhurrana in #PatiPatniAurWohDo. With #SaraAliKhan, #WamiqaGabbi, and #RakulPreetSingh joining the ride, this #MudassarAziz directorial, produced by Bhushan Kumar and Renu Ravi Chopra, and creatively produced by Juno Chopra, brings laughter, love, and chaos this Holi – 4th March 2026."

The Prayagraj Incident During Shoot

Earlier last year, Pati Patni Aur Woh Do made headlines for an unfortunate reason. During a shoot in Prayagraj, a scuffle broke out between locals and members of the film crew. Viral videos captured a crew member being attacked by a local while filming a car sequence. According to News18, there were rumours that even the director might have been assaulted. In one of the viral clips, Ayushmann and Sara were seen engaged in what looked like a heated exchange, which later turned out to be part of a scene for the film. Local police intervened soon after, ensuring the shoot resumed safely.

Nothing Can Stop Kashmera Shah From Posing In Front Of The Camera



Kashmera Shah is having the time of her life on the sets of Laughter Chefs season 3. In the middle of shooting, Shah posed for a few casual clicks. The actress looked playful and bold in tight-fitting bell-bottoms and a half jacket.

Kashmera Shah also briefly interacted with the paparazzi. Laughter Chefs Season 3 features stars like Krushna Abhishek, Debina Bonnerjee, Gurneet Choudhary, Tejasswi Prakash, and Karan Kundrra, among others.

Kashmera Shah On The Sets Of Laughter Chefs Season 3

In a brief clip uploaded by Filmygyan, the actress almost collided with a man while flaunting her look for the camera. She recovered quickly and posed by leaning against the wall.

In another YouTube video, the 53-year-old interacted with the paparazzi while on the sets of Laughter Chefs season 3. "Kya dekh raha hai? [What are you looking at?]" she asks someone. "Jalte raho, mein chalte rahungi [Keep being jealous of me, I'll keep making progress]," she added.

Kashmera also asked a photographer if she looked slim. She mentioned that she is following a strict diet to maintain her figure.

Kashmera Shah's Weight Loss Journey

Kashmera Shah welcomed twins with husband Krushna Abhishek in 2017. However, a 2018 indoor party made the ex-Bigg Boss contestant realise she needed to lose weight. Kashmera Shah revealed last year that she lost 14 kgs. "I had organised the party, and the theme was an Indian night. I did not fit into any of my Indian clothes," Kashmera told ET Times. At the time, Shah said she asked for help from Krushna's brother Rishaab.

During the COVID pandemic lockdown in 2020, Kashmera made significant changes to her diet. "I started cooking during the lockdown, which I have never done. I started cooking healthy food," she told the outlet. Kashmera said that because of the food she prepared, her husband Krushna also "started losing weight". "I began eating healthy food, smaller portions," she recalled. She was surprised to see that she had gradually "lost 14 kgs". "I can't express in words the happiness that I got when I fit into my old clothes," she had added.



The Buddhist heritage of Odisha

Even though Lord Buddha had never visited Odisha during his lifetime, the state has a rich heritage of Buddhism. In fact, Odisha is home to more than 200 Buddhist sites, scattered across its length and breadth. Here, Buddhism flourished from the 6th century BC to at least 15th to 16th century AD. After the death of the Buddha, his followers were divided into two sects?Hinayana' and 'Mahayana'. The latest Buddhist phase is 'Vajrayana' which is believed to have been originated from Odisha. According to the Buddhist scholars of Odisha Institute of Maritime and South East Asian Studies, Biraja (modern Jajpur) was a sacred land of Buddha Padmaprabha and the cradle of 'Mahayana'. The presence of 'Mahayana' antiquities, stupas and relics in Jajpur district are a testimony to this. Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsang visited these Buddhist sites in Odisha in the 7th century and between 8th and 10th century. Buddhism was the religion under the Bhaumakaras clan. The tantric form of 'Mahayana' Buddhism started during this period. One of the most popular Buddhist destinations in Odisha is the Diamond Triangle comprising Ratnagiri, Udayagiri

and Lalitgiri in Jajpur district. There are several places in the state where Buddhism is still practiced today. Here's a look at the sites that would interest travellers on exploring Buddhist heritage of Odisha.

Langudi
Explore the remains of a Buddhist centre of learning that flourished till 11th century at Langudi Hill, located 90 km away from Bhubaneswar. The site is situated in Salipur village of Jajpur district. There are a series of 34 rock-cut Buddhist stupas and several early medieval Buddhist monuments and shrines atop the hill. The most popular of these rock-cut stupas is the 7th century 'Smaudra Mudra' image of Lord Buddha. Historians say the hill also has the remains of Pushpagiri University or Puspagiri Mahavihara, a major Buddhist centre of learning that flourished from 2nd century BC to 10th century AD. Excavations by Odisha Institute of Maritime and South East Asian Studies revealed that the structures found on Langudi Hill are even older and larger than other Buddhist centres of learning like Nalanda and Vikramashila. The remains indicate that it was a centre

of the Hinayana, Mahayana and Vajrayana sects of Buddhism. The northern part of the hill houses the country's oldest Ashoka stupa. Besides images of Buddha in various postures, there are sculptures of Hindu goddesses on the hill. Flowing below the hill is river Kelua, a tributary of river Brahmani. This is a centrally protected site by the Archaeological Survey of India.

Buddhist sites in Balasore and Bhadrak

The districts of Balasore and Bhadrak have a significant number of smaller Buddhist sites. Numerous Buddhist relics, both small and big, lie scattered in Balasore district. There is a museum in Santikanan area which contains images of Khasarpana, Lokeswar, Avalokiteswar, Buddha and Tara. At the 11th century Marichi temple in Ajodhya area of Balasore district, the idols of Goddess Durga (Mahayana Goddess Marichi) and Lord Buddha are worshipped together. Besides these main idols, there are other smaller idols related to Tantric cult and Jainism. There is a small Buddhist stupa on the temple premises. Images of Buddha can also be found at Khadipada and Soro. The ideal base to visit these places is through the town of Balasore with the help of a taxi. Surrounded by hills on three sides, lies a quaint village called Kupari in Bhadrak district (67 km away from Balasore), where remains of an old Buddhist temple and a

monastery have been discovered. Towards the west of the village, visitors can see a well preserved portion of the monastery?a long narrow hall surrounded by pillars. There is an image of Mayadevi near the site and an inscription on the back of it refers to 10th century AD.

Padmasambhava Mahavihara Monastery

Amidst the verdant surroundings in Jirang near Chandragiri of Gajapati district, stands the beautiful Padmasambhava Mahavihara monastery, reportedly the largest in eastern India. The colony which houses the monastery is Buddha Vihar (the land of happiness and plenty) and area is popularly known as a mini Tibet in Odisha. It is a part of the Rigon Thubten Mindrolling monastery that was part of the Tibetan settlement near Chandragiri. The monastery is named after Acharya Padmasambhava, who was born in Odisha and is believed to have spread Buddhism to Tibet in 7th century. Driving through the roads of Jirang, visitors are welcomed to the Buddha Vihar with Buddhist flags on both sides of the road. Inaugurated by Dalai Lama in 2010, it has been built as per the 'Atanpuri style of Nalanda' and in the assembly hall, a 23-foot-high idol of Lord Buddha along with his two disciples have been installed. On the right side of the Buddha's idol is the 1000-armed, 1000-eyed Avalokiteswar. While on the left, is the large idol of Guru Nangsi Zilnon. The five-storey monastery has its interiors richly decorated with traditional religious paintings of Tibetan culture. The 70-feet-high monastery can house over 200 Lamas. Apparently, Jirang is considered one of the earliest Tibetan resettlement villages in the country; the Tibetans had arrived here on May 1, 1963. Visitors can also experience maize cultivation in the village, which is the main avocation of the Tibetans. Jirang can be approached by road through Berhampur.

Kuruma

Located 10 km south-east of the popular Sun temple in Konark, is the ancient lesser known Buddhist site of Kuruma. It is said that a Buddhist monastery flourished in the area, remnants of which were found during excavations by the State Archaeology wing. In fact, in the pages of history, this monastery has been mentioned by Hiuen Tsang. The origin of the site is dated to be between 8th and 9th century AD.



At the site currently, there is a small temple which houses three Buddha images?crowned Buddha seated in Bhumisparas mudra, Padmapani Avalokitesvara and Revanta. These three images are jointly worshipped as 'Yamadharma' by Kuruma villagers. These images were found near a water tank called Dharma Pokhari (tank of Dharma), located at one end of the village, by a school teacher Brajabandhu Dash in the 70s. Later on, the archaeological wing started excavating the site. Historians say the length and width of the monastery is 34 m each and it also houses a shrine chamber, cells for Buddhist monks and a large courtyard, which is in the shape of 'Swastik', denoting tantric Buddhism (Vajrayana or Tantrayana). Visitors can hire taxis from either Puri or Konark to reach Kuruma.

The wonders of Leh and Ladakh



If you are scouring for a comprehensive guide for the places to visit in Leh and Ladakh, here is some help. Check out Pangong Tso that is the undisputed highlight of the region and everything you wanted to know about it. Choose from the ancient monasteries of Lamayuru and Diskit, drive off to the high and mighty Khardung La Pass, wonder in awe at the first sight of Potala Palace's lookalike - Thiksey Monastery or go searching for the elusive Changpas when you visit Tso Moriri. Head out to the Himalayas for a lifetime's experience, Leh and Ladakh have wonders waiting for you.

Leh Palace
Quite an impressive replica of Lhasa's Potala Palace, the Leh Palace is a major attraction in Leh. A nine storey structure in

dun colour, it was the erstwhile home to the royals of Ladakh, built at the behest of King Sengge Namgyal in the 17th century. The Leh Palace rises up against the backdrop of the lofty Himalayas, looking more like a painter's muse. Built mostly of mud, rocks and wood, it is grand in its simplicity. The palace also houses a rich collection of traditional dresses and crowns, thangka paintings and some impressive traditional ornaments. The best part about Leh Palace is its terrace for you can pore over Leh, Stok Kangri and the Zanskar range from it. This one cannot be missed for it looms high in the skyline of Leh, standing guard over this Himalayan kingdom.

Stok Palace

Stok Palace is the less majestic yet more famous of the palaces in Ladakh. At some 14 km from Leh, it was the once summer palace

of Ladakh's royal family. Built over 200 years ago, Stok Palace houses some rare ancient paintings of Buddhist deities Shakyamuni, Avalokiteshvara, Vajrapani, Tara, Amchi etc. The palace museum also houses some 100 plus volumes of Buddhist teachings and a giant statue of Avalokiteshvara. Some interesting artifacts like the jewel-studded crown of Ladakh's erstwhile queen are also housed in the palace. The palace also has a cafe on its terrace and some rooms open for visitors. Prior booking has to be made in case you wish to stay here. Stok Palace is a major pit-stop if you are eager to hit some impressive treks in the Himalayas around.

Pangong Tso

While no words can be apt enough to describe Pangong Tso, words like 'magic' and 'surreal' can be put to good use here. This astonishing, blue-water body at 14,270 ft is guarded by looming mountains. One of the most stunning lakes of the world, Pangong Tso covers 134 km and touches India and Tibet. Also important as a major wetland, it sees flocks of migratory birds in summers. Visiting it in winters is, of course, an out of this world experience for it is completely frozen at that time. The lake lies in the Changthang region of Ladakh at some 170 km from Leh, and has just one cemented stay facility nearby. Foreign nationals need Inner Line Permit to visit the lake; thus it's advisable to check for visitor's guidelines beforehand.

Lamayuru Monastery

Lamayuru, fondly referred to as the Moon Land, is a major stopover on the Leh-Kargil Road. Hidden in the folds of the mountains of this mystical land is the Lamayuru Monastery. One of the oldest gompas in Ladakh and Spiti, this monastery is perched atop a cliff. Going by the legends, this region was once under a lake that was made to dry up by a holy man. The



main sanctum of the monastery has a cave where Mahasiddha Naropa meditated for years. The entire region is considered sacred owing to the monastery's presence and a visit is believed to liberate people from all their sins. Other than its religious significance, the place looks like a picture postcard that has turned real.

Tsemo Fort

This fort cum monastery stands guard over the city of Leh and is a major landmark, visible from everywhere in the city. Built by King Tashi Namgyal, it sees elaborate Buddhist ceremonies in morning and evening. Take the trail leading to the monastery from Leh to witness the interesting rituals. It also houses a three-storey tall statue of Maitreya Buddha, its face made out of solid gold. Also a vantage point for photographers, its terrace gives a bird's eye view of the whole city. Visit it early in the morning to escape the scorching heat, witness the rituals as well as click great shots in the almost golden light that lights it up.

Stok Kangri

Stok Kangri is the highest mountain peak in the Stok range of the Himalayas. At 20,500 ft, it is also the highest trekkable summit in India. It has always been a great lure for trekkers from all over the world and is quite popular since it requires

relatively less trekking skills. Ideally done between 6-10 days, it is one of the must have Ladakh experiences. You need to be properly acclimated to the high altitude conditions before attempting this one. It is advisable to make a summit attempt if you have prior experience of scaling some 14,000 ft peaks. A lot of mental fitness also goes into this one, for weather can take sudden turns on the trek to Stok Kangri. Still, it is a must do if adventure is your calling and you harbour a secret wish to scale a world-famous Indian peak.

Shanti Stupa

Another one for the shutterbugs and the ones interested in culture and Buddhism. A stark white stupa (chorten) standing tall (4276 m) against a backdrop of the barren brown mountains, the Shanti Stupa is nothing less than fascinating. It was built by monks from Ladakh and Japan in 1983 to mark 2500 years of Buddhism in the region and promote world peace. The stupa houses Buddhist relics, placed here by the 14th Dalai Lama. A popular meditation site, it also has a simple cafe which makes up for the hard 15-minute climb up the stairs. Photographers must mark it in bold on their itinerary, for it's a perfect place to shoot time lapse sequences.